ST. TERESA'S

PATER NOSTER

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AINT TERESA'S PATER NOSTER:

A TREATISE ON PRAYER.

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SAINT TERESA'S
PATER NOSTER

A TREATISE ON PRAYER

BY

JOSEPH FRASSINETTI

FORMERLY PRIOR OF S. SABINA, GENOA

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN BY

WILLIAM HUTCH, D.D.

CANON OF THE CATHEDRAL OF CLOYNE

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

My attention was first drawn to Fr. Frassinetti's *Treatise on Prayer* by a note in Ballerini's Edition of Gury's *Moral Theology*, where it is referred to as "an excellent little work"—*Eximium opusculum*.*

The book which merited this commendation from Father Ballerini is something more than its title might seem to imply. It is, in reality, a compendium of Ascetical and Mystical Theology, and, as such, must prove of great advantage not only to religious communities and to many pious seculars, but, in a still higher degree, to priests engaged in the direction of souls. Every priest employed in the ministry of the Confessional is bound, by the nature of his office, to have some acquaintance with Ascetical and Mystical Theology; and yet it is not easy to find these subjects treated by a competent authority in a style sufficiently attractive to encourage the

* See Ballerini's Edition of Gury, *Tract. de Eucharistia*, Pars. i. Appendix i. nota *a* ad num. 341.

technical terms employed. I have, however, made it my rule to adhere religiously to the text, and I trust that my translation will be found a faithful reproduction of the original.

WILLIAM HUTCH.

ST. COLMAN'S COLLEGE, FERMOY,
4th March, 1887.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

SAINT TERESA has explained the Petitions of the Lord's Prayer in her *Way of Perfection*, and has also written on each of them separate *Meditations*,* distributed over the several days of the week. In reading both these works, we can perceive that she was guided by that Divine Spirit, who sometimes imparts knowledge directly, and without the intervention of human study, to those souls that He loves, making them almost prodigies of heavenly wisdom. In truth, the instructions and sentiments of the Saint contained in these books carry with them such an abundance of light and spiritual fervour, that any one who loves prayer can never grow weary of reading them and meditating upon them, and will find therein a method of prayer

* Some critics have doubted whether these Meditations are really the work of Saint Teresa, and would attribute them, instead, to a very pious and learned religious—Fr. John of St. Basil. This theory, however, is not supported by any solid argument, and we therefore adopt the generally received opinion, which accepts Saint Teresa as their author.

so easy and so attractive, that he is forced, in a certain sense, to adopt it.

Having observed, however, that Saint Teresa's commentary and meditations on the Lord's Prayer are not easily within reach of all; that they might prove more useful to some less experienced souls if they were further developed; and that they would accomplish their object all the better by being contained in a single volume, I came to the conclusion that I should be performing a work of some usefulness in collecting and arranging, in a series of chapters, all that the Saint has written on this most divine and most excellent of prayers. And, since some of Saint Teresa's instructions and reflections have reference to the subject of prayer generally, while others have a special application to the Petitions of the Lord's Prayer in particular, this little work, in like manner, will be divided into two parts.

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TREATISE ON PRAYER.

PART I.

Of Prayer in General.

CHAPTER I.

Of the firm resolution with which a Christian ought to apply himself to the holy exercise of prayer.

"Prayer is the royal road to heaven: by travelling along this road, we acquire a great treasure; nor ought we to be concerned because it seems to us that this involves great trouble, for the time will come when we shall understand what a mere nothing is every effort of ours in this life to gain so great a reward." (Saint Teresa, *Way of Perfection*, chap. 21.)* § 1. The necessity of prayer.

"A soul without prayer is like a paralyzed and crippled body, which, though having hands, is

* "*Camino de Perfecion*"—*The Way of Perfection*—a treatise on prayer composed by Saint Teresa in 1563, at the request of her nuns.

—*Translator.*

nevertheless unable to use them." (*Mansions*, I., chap. 1.)*

These quotations from Saint Teresa are sufficient to point out the importance and the necessity of prayer—a matter, indeed, which is already so evident that it cannot be questioned by any Christian.

§ 2. On the necessity of resolving to practise prayer.

Yet there are many Christians who, though anxious to apply themselves to the exercise of prayer, since they know that it will prove to them an abundant source of spiritual blessings, are, nevertheless, unable to resolve on making a beginning; so that, even to their old age, they pray but seldom and badly, to the great loss and peril of their souls.

Now should we happen to belong to this class of persons, we must persuade ourselves that it is our *duty* to enter upon the path of prayer, and firmly to resolve to persevere therein. Let us listen to Saint Teresa, who writes as follows on this subject (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 21): "I affirm that it is very important—nay that it is everything—to commence with a strong and firm determination never to rest until we shall have secured this gift (*i.e.*, the heavenly consolations

* "*Las moradas*," or "The Mansions"—a work on prayer composed by Saint Teresa in 1577, and so called because it is divided into seven *mansions*, in which the Saint places various souls, according to the degree of perfection in prayer to which they have attained.

—*Translator*

bestowed in prayer). To this resolution we must firmly cling, let what will come, let what may happen, no matter what the cost may be, no matter who finds fault with us, no matter whether we reach the goal, or die on the way, or fail in courage to support the trials which we may have to endure, or even though the world itself should sink beneath us. For we are frequently told that 'there are dangers'; that such a one was ruined by adopting this course; that another became the victim of illusions; that such another fell, though he prayed often; that it is injurious to health; that it is not fit for women, since they may fall into delusions, and might occupy themselves more profitably by attending to their spinning," &c.

It is thus the Saint expresses herself in order to give us to understand what manner of resolution we must have when entering on the exercise of prayer, in which we shall have so much opposition to encounter from our own corrupt and evil inclinations, as well as from the world and the devil. Wherefore she would have us give ourselves up to prayer, so to speak, with desperate resolve, allowing nothing to frighten us, or to withdraw us from it. We must make light of the *labour* which it involves because of the aridity, the spiritual desolation, and the disgusts which we may have to endure in the time of prayer. We must not heed the *evil tongues* of the irreligious, or of those silly babblers who may censure our conduct. We must not

turn back, though the devil should represent to us *the road* we have to travel as so long, that our entire life-time would not suffice to accomplish the journey. We must not stop short because we may feel that we have little *courage* to face the opposition which we shall have to encounter from our enemies. We must not be frightened even though the world itself should seem on the brink of ruin, as sometimes appears to be the case to those who devote themselves to a life of contemplation and prayer; for frequently in such cases every one wishes to give his opinion on the subject, and we hear relatives, friends, and acquaintances prophesying, threatening, and predicting all kinds of misfortunes, and especially the loss of bodily health, which, to their thinking, must inevitably be ruined by a life of retirement and prayer.

§ 3. All the danger lies in fearing the danger.

"But," Saint Teresa continues to say, "pay no heed to the fears with which you may be inspired, or to the dangers which may be held up before you. . . . Should any one tell you that there is danger in giving yourself up to a life of prayer, look upon that person as a real danger and avoid him. Do not forget that possibly you may have need of this advice. No doubt it would be extremely dangerous to be wanting in humility and in the other virtues; but God forbid that we should ever regard the path of prayer as a path of danger."

From these words we know that Saint Teresa

was painfully aware of the fact that, amongst those whose duty it is to encourage souls in the practice of prayer, we not unfrequently find some who, under one pretext or another, withdraw them from it. Wherefore she warns these souls that they may occasionally have a need to remember her advice, which is to shun those persons who speak of such dangers and would create such fears in their minds. Then, addressing her Divine Spouse, she implores Him to counteract the great evil which such bad counsellors are capable of effecting. "O my dear Lord," she says, "do Thou defend Thy own cause: Thou seest that these false counsellors misinterpret Thy words: do not permit such weaknesses as these to exist in Thy servants." And the Saint spoke thus because some persons would wish, by distorting the meaning of the Holy Scriptures, to invoke its authority in support of their own prejudices against the spiritual life, and against the practice of prayer, which enters into it so largely.

Again, in her *Life* (chap. 8), Saint Teresa thus addresses the Lord: "O Life of all lives, Thou never destroyest any one of those who put their trust in Thee; but while giving health to the soul, thou dost at the same time sustain the life of the body with more abundant health. I do not know what it is that those fear who have not the courage to begin to make mental prayer, nor can I understand what may be the object of their dread. The devil never wearies of doing

us harm; and he succeeds when, by exciting vain fears, he induces us not to meditate on the offences which we have committed against God, nor on the many favours which we have received from Him, nor on the existence of a heaven or a hell, nor on the immense labours and sufferings which Christ our Lord has endured for us."

Wherefore should we fall in with a spiritual director, who, instead of encouraging and guiding us in the path of prayer, should turn us away from it, we ought to withdraw ourselves from his direction as being really dangerous to us, and likely to end badly in our regard.

§ 4. Reasons why we should adopt this resolution.

In the 23rd chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, Saint Teresa mentions three reasons why a soul should persevere in the resolution to practise prayer, without being deterred therefrom by any difficulty whatever. The first reason is, that when we resolve to consecrate to God our faculty of meditating—that is to say, our loving and trusting attention for the purpose of occupying ourselves with Him in prayer—we ought not to give it as a loan, and as a something to be taken back again, but we ought rather to give it to Him as a perpetual, irrevocable gift, remembering how many priceless gifts we, on our part, have received from Him; "just as a wife who receives from her husband many precious jewels, gives him in return at least a ring, not because of its intrinsic value (for everything that she

possesses is already his), but as a pledge that she will be faithful to him until death". And therefore the Saint remarks that *we ought not any longer to regard as our own the time* that we have determined to spend in conversing with God in prayer, except, indeed, we should happen to be prevented from attending to our devotions *for one or a few days, through press of business or through illness.*

The second reason is, that the devil is not so powerful to tempt very determined souls; nay, rather, "he is extremely afraid of resolute souls, since he knows by experience that they do him great mischief, and whatever he may invent to injure them eventually turns out to their benefit and that of others, so that he comes off the loser. . . . But if the devil sees any one fickle, inconstant in virtue, and not earnestly resolved to persevere, he will give him no peace day or night, but will inspire him with fears and suggest inconveniences without end."

The third reason is, that this determination is of great assistance to encounter and overcome all the obstacles that may present themselves; and Saint Teresa illustrates this by the example of a soldier who, knowing that his only hope of life rests in conquering his enemy, is resolved to fight to the last drop of his blood. "Such a one," she says, "does not fear the blows so much, because he knows how important the victory is, and that his life depends upon it."

From the foregoing teaching and exhortations

of the Saint, we learn that we must take up this exercise of prayer with a most resolute determination never to abandon it to the end of our lives.

§ 5. Exhortations to irresolute souls.

Do you, therefore, Christian souls, who by God's grace already know the vanity and the misery of this world's goods, who already understand in some slight degree how sweet and good it is to converse in your hearts with God by means of prayer, and who hear His loving voice inviting and urging you to do so, resolve, once for all, to give yourselves up to a life of recollection and prayer, which shall be for you no less consoling than profitable. But let this resolution involve the entire surrender of yourselves to an exercise so sweet and salutary; so that you may never again look back, but may persevere therein constantly, until the Divine Spouse, who now invites you to an intimate union with Himself by faith, may summon you to a perfect union with Him in glory.

But if you should still be irresolute or cowardly through vain and false apprehensions, mark well the following passage from Saint Teresa, in which she speaks in general of the courage and resolution which one ought to have in reducing to practice holy inspirations: "I have already proved many times by experience," she says, "that if in the beginning I help myself by resolving to perform the good work solely in order to give pleasure to God (for, that our merit may be the more abundant, it is His will that the

soul should feel dismayed only in the beginning of a good work, and the greater the difficulty in overcoming this feeling the greater is our merit, and the more pleasant becomes the task we have set ourselves to accomplish), His Divine Majesty gives a recompense even in this life, by some means which can be understood only by those who have experienced them. This, as I have said, I know by practical experience in many affairs of considerable difficulty; and therefore, if I were in a position to give counsel in such a matter, I should never advise that when a good resolution comes, it should be allowed to pass unheeded through fear of putting it into execution. For if we act solely for God alone, there is no fear that the matter will turn out badly in the end, since He is omnipotent" (*Life*, chap. 4). In conformity with this principle, she gives it as her opinion, in the 13th chapter of the same work, "that Saint Peter lost nothing when throwing himself into the sea, although he was afterwards afraid," for his fear proceeded from weakness of faith, which the Lord, nevertheless, mercifully supplied. The resolution to embrace an entirely holy and spiritual life likewise caused fear at first to Blessed Henry Suso, and the devil availed of this fear to withhold him from carrying out his resolution; but the holy man replied to the tempter: *God invites me to give myself up entirely to Him: if, then, I fling myself into His arms, is it possible that He will withdraw Himself from me so that I fall?*

Again, Saint Teresa, speaking expressly of prayer in the 13th chapter just quoted, says: "Almighty God is the friend of courageous souls, provided they proceed with humility and are utterly distrustful of themselves. I have never yet seen any of these left behind in the race, nor have I seen a cowardly soul, even though humble, make the same progress in many years that these more courageous ones make in a few days. I am astonished at the wonderful help it brings to one in this race to dare great things. For though the soul should not have strength all at once, nevertheless it makes a noble effort to fly, and actually makes considerable progress, though it immediately grows weary and stops, like a little bird whose wings are not yet full grown." However, to adopt the Saint's comparison, once the first attempt to fly has been made, a second and a third will follow, until at length, when the wings shall have attained their full development, it will know not weariness, and will stop no more.

CHAPTER II.

Of the importance of commencing the holy exercise of prayer in some manner or other.

§ 1. Wonderful discretion of Saint Teresa.

We find such wonderful discretion in the works of Saint Teresa, that while her teaching is calculated to stimulate those who are strong and resolute in

God's service to attempt the greatest things for Him, yet it never frightens or discourages those who are weak and faint-hearted: on the contrary, it helps them very much to commence to do what little they can, so that they may afterwards gradually advance, in proportion as they make progress in acquiring virtue. Notwithstanding the arguments and exhortations contained in the preceding pages, it is possible that persons of this latter class, seeing that, on the one hand, the Saint requires of them to take up the exercise of prayer with a resolution so full, and firm, and constant, that nothing shall deter them from carrying it into execution, and, on the other hand, not feeling themselves sufficiently strong, and prompt, and courageous for this task, may be tempted to despair of ever becoming men of prayer, and so may fail even to commence this salutary practice.

But such persons must not lose heart. Even though at present they should feel themselves irresolute and inconstant, they must not on this account despair of one day quenching their thirst at the living water of heavenly consolation which flows from the fountain of prayer. Wherefore Saint Teresa assures us, that God "is so good, that He gives to drink in various measures to those who follow Him, so that no one may remain unrefreshed, or may die of thirst. For from this most abundant fountain (of prayer) there flow rivers both great and little, and sometimes tiny pools for infants, that is for those who

are but just beginning, and who not only find such a supply sufficient, but would even be rather frightened were we to point out to them more copious streams" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 20). Therefore even those who in the path of prayer are weak and tottering like infants, ought to hope for some draught of that living water which is so refreshing to our souls.

§ 2. Even though our resolution should be imperfect, nevertheless we ought to begin the exercise of prayer.

In the chapter just quoted (chap. 20), Saint Teresa continues thus: "I do not mean that whoever lacks the desperate resolve to devote himself to prayer, should on this account neglect to make a beginning, because our Lord will go on perfecting him; and even though he should do no more than take one step forward, yet that has such great virtue in it, that he must not fear losing it, or despair of being amply rewarded. He is, we may say, like one who has a rosary to which Indulgences are attached, so that if he uses it once, he gains an Indulgence; if several times, he gains still more Indulgences; but if he never use it, but keep it locked up in a box, it were better that he should not have it at all. Hence though one should not afterwards continue to walk in this path on which he had entered, yet the little progress he has made therein will give him light to resume his journey successfully, and the further he advances the more light will he have. In a word, I regard it as certain that the fact of his having once begun to walk in the path

of prayer will injure him in no respect, even though he should afterwards abandon it, because what is good never does any harm. Wherefore, my daughters, with regard to all those persons with whom you may be on familiar and friendly terms, endeavour when conversing with them to banish from their minds all fear of commencing so excellent a practice. . . . It would be a great favour bestowed upon you by the Lord, should He through your agency excite some soul to aspire to this blessing."

You see, therefore, that even though one should lack the determination and resolution to persevere in the practice of prayer to the end of his life and at all hazards, nevertheless he should not on this account think himself unworthy or incapable of commencing it. Begin, says Saint Teresa, and take even one step forward, by devoting yourself to prayer even for a single day—even for one solitary occasion. God will accept this first effort, and will give you greater grace to make another step in advance, by returning to prayer on some other day, or on another occasion. That first prayer has in it so much efficacy, that your first effort cannot prove fruitless, nor will the time spent therein go unrewarded.

It is true that there will be a great difference between the person who begins with a firm resolution, and advances in the exercise of prayer without ever halting, and the other who begins in a faint-hearted and faltering manner, and who,

feeling his strength fail, stops after the first few steps. The former will run after Christian perfection, as the stag runs towards the fountain; he will fly towards it, as the eagle does towards the sun; whereas the latter will move slowly and with difficulty, like a heavy ox—he will raise himself up like a fowl which has lost the feathers of its wing. However any movement—to raise oneself up even ever so little—is better than to do nothing at all.

The simile of the indulgenced rosary, introduced by Saint Teresa, comes in very appropriately. Whoever uses such a rosary frequently gains many Indulgences, but he who uses it only once gains one Indulgence only; nevertheless even this one is better than nothing, because even a trifling good is always to be preferred to the absence of all good. Wherefore the Saint very justly observes, that even though one should halt after having taken the first step forward, nevertheless, that first step helps to further progress later on, and that first prayer obtains for him who makes it greater light to continue the holy exercise afterwards. Saint Teresa concludes by saying that what is good never does any harm; and that, consequently, no matter how little the good may be, or how brief its duration, there never can be any justification for abandoning it. Wherefore of such importance did she deem it that this exercise should be commenced anyhow, that she exhorted her nuns to use every endeavour with their

acquaintances and friends, to remove from them all foolish fears which might prevent them from making this salutary beginning.

§ 3. An additional motive for making a beginning.

Although the foregoing motives are amply sufficient to persuade the most irresolute and timid, Saint Teresa supplements them by still stronger expressions in the 23rd chapter, where, after having stated that one must not, as it were, *lend* to God his mental faculties in the exercise of prayer, but must give them up to Him *completely and irrevocably*, she continues to say that, nevertheless, even "a loan will be sufficient, in the case of one who has not the heart to make an absolute gift". And then she concludes as follows: "In a word, do something, for our Lord takes everything as payment on account: in everything we find Him ready to accommodate Himself to our wishes. In taking our accounts, He is not strict but generous; and no matter how great the debt may be, He considers it nothing to remit and forgive it, in order to gain ourselves. He is so considerate, that you need not fear that He will leave unrewarded even the lifting up of your eyes to think of Him."

This is, in truth, to have a proper appreciation of the goodness of God—"*Think of the Lord in goodness*" (Wisdom, cap. i., v. 1),—and it is only the saints who succeed in entertaining the noble sentiment in all its fulness; because they alone, as far as it is permitted to human weak-

ness, have a full and exalted conception of the immense goodness of God. We never find like expressions of confidence and security except in the writings of the saints, because it is only from their inflamed hearts that such sentiments can possibly proceed.

Does God, then, when He sees our hearts so niggardly with Him as to refuse to give Him generously the gift of our entire life, accept even the miserable loan of an occasional day and of an occasional hour? As payment of the immense debt which we owe Him, does He place everything to our credit, no matter how miserable be the offering which our meanness prompts us to make? Instead of being irritated, and chastising the insult which we offer Him, does He accept lovingly from our hand whatever we are pleased to give Him? Does He, then, pay little heed to the amount of our indebtedness provided He is enabled to gain our souls, and does He regard it as nothing to condone the immense sums which we owe Him? And not satisfied even with all this, does He keep an account even of every pious movement of our eyes, to reward us for it hereafter?

YES: provided He but sees in us the first commencements of a good disposition, by which we begin to desire to approach Him by prayer, He accepts everything—even a glance, even a sigh; and instead of attending to the immensity of our obligations to Him, it would seem that He heeds only His own immense love towards

us. And this is why Saint Teresa does not hesitate to say in *The Mansions*, II.: "No matter how great the tepidity which may accompany prayer, it is still much esteemed by God. And do you, my sisters, take care not to value lightly this first grace (of praying even with tepidity), and be not cast down or frightened when you perceive that you do not all at once yield yourselves up entirely to the Lord; for His Divine Majesty well knows how to wait many days and years, especially when He sees perseverance and good desires on your part."

§ 4. Reasonableness of this doctrine.

Should we imagine that Saint Teresa has exaggerated in this matter through fervour of spirit, the examples which confront us in the entire history of the Church, and within our own daily experience, would be sufficient to disabuse us of this erroneous opinion. In truth, the history of the Church affords us very many examples of persons who commenced to approach the Lord with coldness and hesitation; who advanced now and again barely a few steps, as if overawed by the sublimity of the spiritual life, and then quickly stood still; so that one should say that, so long as they continued to act in this manner, it would be impossible for them ever to reach the happy, but difficult, goal at which they aimed. But, nevertheless, because they preserved that seedling of goodwill—though weak and small—assisted by the exceeding goodness of the Lord, who did not regard their merits but His own love, they

finally advanced boldly and resolutely, and happily reached that height which at first so much frightened them. In addition to those known to us, there are other such examples beyond number, which are not recorded in history, but lie hidden in the infinite treasury of God's mercy, and are, as our experience tells us, occasionally repeated under our own eyes.

However, we must not conclude from what has just been said that this is the manner in which we ought to act with the Lord; for we have already seen what a determined resolution Saint Teresa requires in the person who wishes to give himself up to the exercise of prayer. But the object of all that has been said is, to encourage souls who, otherwise, fearing to do little, might end by doing nothing at all, and who might abandon the race altogether, through fear of not reaching the goal. The object of all that has been said is, to nurture the tender seedlings of an incipient piety, which though at their first budding they give but small promise, yet by careful cultivation may come to something, and may even grow wonderfully, and produce abundant fruit.

Those evils which Saint Teresa thus endeavours to avert, would be certain to result from the teaching of other less discreet masters of the spiritual life, who insist that unless one begins with great fervour no good effect follows; that without a full and perfect resolution from the very start, even the smallest measure of success

is impossible. Directors of this type might be useful to stimulate souls that were already fervent and resolute; but they would at the same time crush the feeble efforts of an incipient goodwill, which begins to spring up in souls. when they first feel the gentle breathing of the Holy Ghost, which warms them and renders them prolific, that they, too, though later on, may produce their fruits of eternal life. Such directors might, perhaps, cultivate successfully in the vineyard of the Lord those well-developed and hardy plants which require little care; but they would not tend successfully, nay they would trample down without perceiving it, many tiny buds, which, by gentle and patient culture, would gradually develop into vigorous and fruitful trees.

§ 5. Concluding remarks of Saint Teresa.

But let us hear how Saint Teresa concludes her remarks on this subject, in order to determine irresolute souls to enter on the path of prayer, at least for a trial. "Do not fear," she says, "that our Lord will suffer you to die of thirst, for He invites us all to drink at this fountain. This I have already said, and I would wish to repeat it often; because those persons are very cowardly who do not yet fully know the goodness of God by experience, although they know it by faith. But it is a great blessing to have experienced the friendship and the tokens of love which He bestows on those who walk in this path, and how He defrays, as it were, all the expenses of their journey. Wherefore I am not surprised, that

those who have not yet experienced this should wish to have security, that they will receive some interest for what they give. Now you already know that there is a hundred for one even in this life, and that our Lord has said: 'Ask and you shall receive'. If you do not believe the words of our Divine Lord reported in His gospel, then, my sisters, there is no use in my worrying myself to convince you of it. Yet if any one doubt it, I would say that little will be lost in making the experiment; for this journey has this advantage, that while engaged in it one receives more than is asked, or than can be desired" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 23).

Be not affrighted, therefore, and do not despair because of your weakness, you timid and irresolute souls, who have not yet tasted how sweet the Lord is to those who draw nigh to Him, and who dwell with Him in the holy exercise of prayer. Have confidence in the words of Saint Teresa, and begin, you also, to give yourselves up to prayer, even to the small extent that you deem possible. To take even a few steps forward in this path will be better than to take none at all. Though at present you may be very cold and irresolute, yet, touched by some loving grace of our Lord, you may become inflamed in His service, and resolute to a degree which you could not now deem possible; and then you will be able to make bold and resolute progress, which will be to you of incalculable advantage and unspeakable consolation. And,

on the other hand, what can you possibly lose by making a trial? Read over again the last passage quoted above from Saint Teresa, and act as she counsels you to do.

CHAPTER III.

Of the kind of prayer to which we ought to apply ourselves.

§ 1. Of the amount of prayer which we ought to make.

It is not only difficult, but impossible, to lay down a uniform rule for all, regarding the amount of time that might be profitably spent in prayer; and in her *Way of Perfection* Saint Teresa does not define how much time should be devoted each day to prayer, because she wrote for the benefit of her Religious, whose Rule obliged them, as she says (chap. 21), *to pray without intermission*—a Rule, indeed, which has equally been given to all Christians, as we are assured in these passages of Holy Writ: "*Pray without ceasing*" (1. Thess. v. 17); and again: "*We ought always to pray, and not to faint*" (Luke xviii. 1).

Since, then, this rule has been given to all Christians, we are forced to conclude that it is adapted to all in general; and it ought not, consequently, to frighten any one, as though it involved an impossibility. It is a rule given to us by the Holy Ghost: it must, therefore, be

reasonable and discreet; and consequently our observations will be confined simply to examining how this rule is to be understood.

It is quite clear that this rule cannot be understood in the strict material signification of the words, which would imply that a Christian must give himself up incessantly to prayer strictly so called. What we are given to understand by this rule is, that a Christian must devote to prayer a suitable portion of his time, each one according to his state and condition; and, in order that we may not err in this matter, it were well that this should be determined for us by a discreet spiritual director, who will mark out such a portion of time to be allotted to prayer, as he may judge proportioned to each one's capacity. By this rule of praying always, we must understand, likewise, that a Christian should direct all his acts to the glory of God, by cultivating the thought of the divine presence, and a habit of interior recollection of which we shall speak later on. In this manner we may observe perfectly the rule of *praying always and never growing faint.*

Let each one, then, consult his own director; let him be exact in making that amount of prayer that will be assigned to him; let all his actions be directed to give glory to God; let him endeavour to live constantly in the divine presence; and in this manner he will make all the prayer that he is bound to make.

Prayer is commonly divided into *vocal* and

mental. Some say that the first kind is necessary and sufficient; others maintain that the second kind also is necessary, and therefore that *both* are indispensable to those who wish to lead a life of prayer. Let us see what Saint Teresa teaches on the subject: "For solid understandings," she writes, "and souls that are well trained and have the gift of interior recollection, there are many excellent printed books. . . . Now since you possess, as I have said, such books, in which there are admirable instructions on the beginning and end of prayer, and the mysteries of the Life and Passion of our Lord are arranged in excellent order according to the days of the week; in which, moreover, you have meditations on death, on judgment, on hell, on our own nothingness and our great indebtedness to God; whosoever is capable of, and is accustomed to, this kind of prayer, has no need of further instruction, since the Lord will conduct him by so good a way into a harbour of light, and a good end will correspond with such good beginnings. . . . But what I would desire to speak of here is, to lay down some remedy for those who may not be able to travel by this path, should it please God that I speak to the purpose on the subject; and even though I should fail to do so, it will serve at least to make you understand that there are many souls who pass through this trial, so that if any of you should be similarly afflicted, you may not be troubled on this

§ 2. Of the kind of prayer to be practised.

account. We meet with some souls and intellects so disorderly and confused, that, like unbridled horses, no one can check them; they rush hither and thither, ever restless; and this unsteady disposition proceeds either from their natural temperament, or exists through the permission of God" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 19). For the present let us pause here.

§ 3. Of those who can, and of those who cannot, meditate.

From the foregoing extract we see clearly that, when there is question of prayer, Saint Teresa distinguishes two classes of persons. The first consists of those who have a *solid* and *trained* intellect, who have the gift of *interior recollection*, and who are able to follow well-ordered meditations on the Life and Passion of our Lord, on the Four Last Things, on their own failings and their own obligations—subjects on which many books of meditation have been published by masters of the spiritual life. Regarding persons of this class, the Saint says that they ought to follow this method of prayer, that is to say, systematic, well-ordered meditation, since it is for them the most natural and secure path. But Saint Teresa, at the same time, recognises the fact that there are *many other persons* who are unable to adopt this method, being of a distracted and wandering turn of mind, so that they cannot, like persons of the first class, recollect themselves, and dwell in meditation on any particular point. The Saint recognises, also, the fact, that this impotence on their part is

either an imperfection of their nature, or may even be the result of a special disposition of God, suspending in their case that natural ability which they would otherwise possess.

Wherefore it follows that *we must not insist on mental prayer indiscriminately in the case of all* who wish to apply themselves to the exercise of prayer, since it is a matter which for many persons would be not only difficult but impossible, as being *foreign to their nature*, or *contrary to what God permits* in their case.

§ 4. Sufficiency of vocal prayer.

Must, then, those who are unable to meditate apply themselves to vocal prayer alone? Certainly they must apply themselves to vocal prayer, by which, however, as we shall see later on, we are not to understand mere words uttered with the lips. Indeed, Saint Teresa does not wish that those souls who feel no inclination for mental prayer should *worry and trouble* themselves, nor does she even direct that they should *labour* to acquire the dispositions necessary for mental prayer, since it is impossible to acquire and reduce them to practice if they are foreign to our nature, or if God, for His own ends, denies them to us.

And, on the other hand, what possible reason can there be why these souls should worry themselves, and labour to acquire the gift of meditation? Is it, perhaps, because mental prayer is necessary to save one's soul, or to arrive at perfection? Saint Teresa teaches the opposite very distinctly. She says that even those who

have not the grace to make mental prayer, may still reach the heights of perfect prayer, so as to drink of "the fountain of living water, concerning which the Saviour said to the Samaritan woman, that whosoever should drink of it should not thirst for ever . . . clear water . . . which, if we once drink of it, leaves the soul, as I firmly believe, pure and cleansed from every stain". She asserts, furthermore, that such persons may attain "the gift of true tears, which are those which proceed from true prayer," and the fire of God's love which would desire to "set all the world aflame . . . a love and desire of God which unassisted nature could not sustain . . . without imperilling life," and which must consequently be moderated and restrained by discretion, which, as she says, is "necessary in all things". Such is the teaching of the Saint throughout the entire 19th chapter of her *Way of Perfection*, and again, in the 25th chapter, she assures us that these souls by attending to vocal prayer may reach the heights of perfect contemplation. "But in order that you may not imagine," she says, "that little advantage is derived from vocal prayer performed in a perfect manner, I tell you that it is very possible that while you are repeating the 'Our Father,' or some other vocal prayer, the Lord may raise you to perfect contemplation." And afterwards, in the 30th chapter, she brings forward an example of this: "I know a person," she says, "who could never make any

other than vocal prayer, and yet by practising this she possessed everything. If she did not pray vocally, her mind became so distracted that she could not endure it; but would to God that all of us possessed the gift of mental prayer such as she had it. In certain 'Our Fathers' which she used to recite in honour of the several effusions of Blood by our Divine Lord, she used to continue in prayer for about two or three hours. She once came to me in great distress, because she did not know how to make mental prayer, nor could she practise the prayer of contemplation, but could merely pray vocally. I asked her what prayer she used to say, and I perceived that though she confined herself to the 'Our Father,' yet she enjoyed pure contemplation, and was even raised by God to unite herself with Him by the prayer of union. And this I clearly recognised in her actions, because she led a very exemplary life, so that I praised the Lord for it, and envied her her vocal prayer."

We see then that, according to Saint Teresa's teaching, those who are incapable of meditating have no reason to be uneasy on this account; and that, consequently, there is no reason why they should make violent efforts to obtain this gift. Such efforts might prove not only useless but hurtful, causing, as the Saint likewise teaches, scruples, anxieties, and perplexities, which would destroy the peace of the soul and impede its spiritual progress. "There are other

§ 5. We must not force ourselves to make mental prayer.

persons," she writes, "who, even when they assist themselves by reading, cannot practise meditation, but only vocal prayer, to which they principally confine themselves. There are some imaginations and minds so volatile, that they cannot dwell on one thing, but are always restless, and this to such an extreme degree, that should any one strive to fix their thoughts on God, they abandon themselves to a thousand absurdities, scruples, and doubts" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 17).

And should any one say that meditation is a very efficacious means to arrive at perfection, the Saint does not deny this: she merely teaches that vocal prayer is an equally efficacious means. Wherefore, since the really important question in this matter consists in attaining the end in view, and not in adopting one means rather than another, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that those who have no capacity for mental prayer ought not to be cast down on this account, nor ought they to force themselves to practise it. And should any one wish to restrict this teaching to those who live in the world in the midst of distractions, and who lack the opportunities and the instruction required for mental prayer, Saint Teresa shows the unreasonableness of this restriction, likewise, in the 24th chapter of the same work, where she speaks thus: "Let us now address ourselves to those souls who, as I said, cannot recollect themselves, nor fix their minds on mental prayer, nor medi-

tate. . . . If perchance such a one should come into this convent (seeing that, as I have said, all do not proceed along the same road), I wish to give you some advice . . . how you are to pray vocally." From these words we see that the Saint *intends her teaching on this sufficiency of vocal prayer to apply also to religious persons—even to nuns*—and to nuns who, like the Discalced Carmelites, lead a life of more or less continual prayer.

§ 6. This doctrine is confirmed by St. John of the Cross.

Saint John of the Cross is in perfect accord with Saint Teresa on this subject, and puts the following words into the mouth of the Divine Spouse: "The first way is that of vocal prayer. To whomsoever I give this gift, I give a talent so excellent, that if he but know how to traffic with it, he will obtain heaven. . . . There are not a few who, when they begin to recite the Rosary or other devout prayers, are immediately inflamed with spiritual fervour, but the moment they cease to pray vocally, all devotion vanishes, and their spirit becomes frozen within them. Now persons of this class must pursue the path of vocal prayer, and their confessors must help them on in it. . . . If you are unable to meditate, my daughters, do not desire a gift which I do not wish you to possess; because should you do so your desire will not be gratified, and this will bring you trouble of heart. Begin, then, to desire that which I wish, and you will obtain it, and it will bring you

peace. If I do not bestow upon you these two talents (by which is meant the gift of meditation), do you wish to wrest them forcibly out of my hands? Certainly not: humble thyself and take what I give thee, and that will doubtless prove better for thee than what thou thyself desirest."

We see, therefore, that, according to the teaching of the other great master of the spiritual life, vocal prayer is sufficient to gain life eternal; and since there are *not a few* who are unable to meditate, these should rest content with the disposition of heaven in their regard, and even believe that it is better so. However, to remove all possibility of error, and for the better understanding of what is to follow, we shall explain this matter more fully in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

What Saint Teresa means when she says that mental prayer is not necessary.

§ 1. There are two kinds of mental prayer.

When Saint Teresa teaches that meditation is not necessary for many souls, nay that it is unsuited to them, and that consequently they should not be troubled if they are unable to meditate, we must not suppose that she is speaking absolutely of every kind of meditation, of every description of mental prayer; for, as we shall see, she wishes

that our vocal prayer should be united to mental prayer, and consequently to meditation. *We must, therefore, distinguish two kinds of mental prayer:* one, which is to be practised solely by those who have the knowledge and the gift to do so; another, which is necessary for all.

You will have observed that when Saint Teresa speaks of meditation as unnecessary, she is speaking of meditation made with the aid of "*books, in which there are admirable instructions on the beginning and the end of prayer, and the mysteries of the life and death of our Lord, together with meditations on Death, on Judgment, on Hell, on our own nothingness and our indebtedness to God, arranged in excellent order for the different days of the week*". Wherefore it is clear that Saint Teresa is speaking of *methodical* meditation, made according to a regular rule and system, with its preludes and conclusions, and its divisions into parts and points, in which we spend a certain determined period of time, keeping the mind fixed upon a certain selected subject, in order to derive therefrom such lights as it may be calculated to afford, and to excite in our hearts affections in harmony with these lights.

Now of this kind are those courses of meditation on the Four Last Things, on the Life, Passion, and Death of our Lord, and on the other mysteries and truths of holy faith, which we find in so many excellent books of which the Saint speaks, and which have been multiplied to

such a wonderful degree since her time, to the great advantage of Christian piety. With the help of such books, devout persons are accustomed to make half an hour's meditation once or twice each day, according as each one's condition and circumstances may permit. This, then, is the kind of meditation of which Saint Teresa speaks, which she so much praises and approves of for those who have capacity to practise it, but which, at the same time, she believes to be *beyond the reach of many*, who have no natural aptitude for it, or whom God wishes to travel by another road, being, as He is, the supreme guide to conduct souls by whatsoever way He wills.

But there is *another kind of meditation*, which is simple, devoid of all art and method, unencumbered by divisions into certain parts and points, and unrestricted by any limits of time. This kind of meditation consists in nothing else than in directing the attention of our minds to the truths of faith, and to our own obligations, and ought invariably to accompany us in reading pious books, in hearing the word of God, and at the time of prayer. Without this attention it is absolutely impossible to live as good Christians and to attain perfection; because a Christian who reads good books without reflecting on the truths which he finds there, who hears the word of God without heeding what is said to him, who prays without attending either to the presence of God with whom he is speaking, or to the nature

of the petitions which he addresses to Him, must necessarily be a careless Christian, who lives at haphazard, and who is little concerned about the salvation of his soul and the service of God. This *attention of our mind* to the truths of holy faith and to our obligations *is that meditation which is necessary for all;* and from such meditation neither Saint Teresa, nor any other spiritual guide can dispense any one who wishes to be saved, and still less any one who aspires to perfection.

§ 2. Sufficiency of the last-mentioned kind of meditation.

When one practises diligently this second kind of meditation, he does not need meditation of the first kind, either to secure his salvation, or to attain perfection. Saint Teresa further confirms this teaching, by the example of a person who was known to her. "I know," she says, "a very old person, who has led a very good life (God grant that mine may be like hers), devoted to penitential exercises, and a great servant of God, who for many years past has spent several hours each day in vocal prayer, but yet cannot succeed in making meditation" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 17).

Moreover, experience daily brings this truth under our observation, and, as it were, makes it palpable to us. For we continually meet with persons who have never made a meditation methodically, and who in fact do not even know how to set about it; and yet by simple meditation, that is, by reflecting on the word of God

when they hear it in a church, and by attending to their vocal prayers when reciting them, they keep faith so well alive in their hearts, that they attain to a very enviable state of perfection, and some of them are even favoured with extraordinary graces and with the gift of contemplation.

But setting contemplation aside altogether, to which all pious souls are not raised by God, it is certain that these persons reach the third degree of the spiritual life, of which Saint Bernard speaks in his *Ladder of Recluses*, or *Method of Prayer*. The holy Doctor places four steps in this ladder, by which he would have Religious mount to perfection. The first is *reading*, to which corresponds the hearing of God's Word: the second is *meditation*, either simple or methodical, as the Saint draws no distinction between them: the third is *prayer:* the fourth is *contemplation.* Of the third step, which he calls by the general name of *prayer*, he says: *est devota cordis intentio in Deum pro malis amovendis et bonis adipiscendis*—that is to say, a devout attention of the heart fixed upon God, whereby the soul, having reached this step, gives vent to its desires to be freed from real evils, and to be enriched with true and solid goods. Happy they who reach this degree, in which, ordinarily, the soul no longer feels any weariness in meditating, but, on the contrary, is refreshed by giving unchecked freedom to the fulness of spiritual delights, while the heart lifts itself up to God, becoming, as it

were, dissolved in ardent affections, like the incense which burns in the fire.

By God's grace, many souls have reached this degree. The fervour of their prayer manifests itself even exteriorly, so that they excite envy in those who desire to pray well. And yet we know that they reach this degree not by means of *methodical* meditation, but solely through that *simple* kind mentioned above. Such souls are already well-disposed for contemplation, should God call them to it; and this contemplation, of which we have so often spoken, is a very high gift of God, the nature of which is known only to those who possess and enjoy it. Saint Bernard says that it is "an elevation of the soul, which remains suspended in God, and tastes the joys of eternal sweetness" *(In Scala Claus)*. Blessed Columbine calls it "a flight of love, an immensity of happiness, the compliment of love, the highest of all possible enjoyments" (*Letter 19 to Dom. de Monticelli*); and Saint John of the Cross says that "it is nothing else than a secret, peaceful, loving infusion of God, who inflames the soul with love" (*The Obscure Night*, book I., chap. 10).

§ 3. Of the sense in which we must understand many passages which speak of meditation.

Wherefore we must remark that many passages of Holy Writ, and of the Fathers of the Church, which are quoted to prove the necessity of meditation, must all be understood not of *formal* and *methodical*, but of *simple* meditation; for though the former is very

useful, it cannot by any means be called necessary, as we have already sufficiently shown. And should any one endeavour to apply such passages to formal meditation, as though it were all but indispensable at least for the attainment of Christian perfection, we are compelled to say that there are *no grounds whatever* for putting forward this view. To support their contention, these persons ought, at least, to advance in its favour some pronouncements of saints, as clear and evident as are those of Saint Teresa and of Saint John of the Cross, which we have cited in support of the opposite opinion.

Wherefore we must once again conclude, that those who feel within themselves a capacity for formal meditation ought to practise it, as being a good and secure path to perfection; and they ought, moreover, to suppose that it is God's will that they should walk in this path, since He has given them the disposition suitable to it. But let not those who do not feel a capacity for mental prayer be disquieted on this account, but *apply themselves to vocal prayer.* It is, indeed, a different road, but it leads to the same goal; and they must persuade themselves that it is by this road God wishes them to travel, since they find the other closed against them. What matters it by which of these two roads we travel, provided we succeed in quenching our thirst at that fountain of living water which so refreshes our spirit? It is a great consolation to know that God wishes all of us to

§ 4. Practical conclusion.

drink of it; and our great anxiety ought to be *to seek it in the manner in which He wishes it to be sought for by us.* Let us conclude with these words of Saint Teresa: "Observe that our Lord invites *all;* and since He is truth itself, there is no longer room for doubt on this point. If this banquet were not open to *all,* the Lord would not summon all to it; and even though He did, He would not say: 'I will give you to drink'; He might have said: 'Come to Me all of you, for at least you will lose nothing thereby, and I will give to drink to whomsoever it may please Me'. But since He has issued His invitation to *all* without adding this limitation, I regard it as certain, that this living water will not be wanting to any one who does not loiter by the way. May our Lord who has promised it, give us, in His mercy, grace to seek it as it ought to be sought" (*Way of Perfection,* chap. 19).

CHAPTER V.

Of the mental prayer which ought to accompany vocal prayer.

§ 1. Of the interior attention required in prayer.

We have said in the last chapter that Saint Teresa is not satisfied with prayer which proceeds merely from the lips, and that she neither will, nor can, dispense any one from *interior attention to prayer.* In proof of this, let us see what

she teaches in the 22nd chapter of her *Way of Perfection.* "Know, my daughters," she says, "that as to our prayer being mental or not, the difference does not consist in keeping the mouth shut or open. For if, while uttering, a prayer vocally, I remain interiorly recollected and alive to the fact that I am speaking with God, being more intent on this thought than on the words which I utter, I am then, at one and the same time, practising *both mental and vocal prayer.* But should any one assert that it is sufficient to speak to God merely with the lips when you recite the 'Our Father,' though your heart may be all the while thinking of the world, I will not stay to argue with such a one. For if you would conduct yourself in a proper manner when speaking to so great a Lord, it is right that you reflect both *with whom* you are speaking, and who *you* yourself are, at least if you wish to speak with due respect. For how could you speak to a king, and give him his title of 'Majesty,' or 'Sire,' or know the ceremonies which are usual in addressing a great prince, unless you understand well both his rank and your own condition? You must show him that respect which his rank demands and which custom gives him, or otherwise you will be turned out of doors as clowns, and will be unable to transact the business which brought you into the prince's presence."

Nevertheless, because some persons, as the Saint hinted above, pretended that it is possible to pray well by merely uttering certain forms of

words, without being at all concerned about the interior attention of the heart, Saint Teresa continues as follows: "Now what is this my Lord? What is this my Sovereign? How can it be endured? Thou, my God, art an eterna. king, and Thy kingdom is not a borrowed one. I experience a particular delight almost every time I hear it said in the Creed that Thy kingdom hath no end. I praise Thee, O Lord, and bless Thee for ever. Thy kingdom shall endure through all eternity. Never, O Lord, permit it to be considered a good thing, that he who speaks with Thee should do so only with his lips. What is this, Christians, which you assert—that mental prayer is not necessary? I certainly am of opinion that you do not know what you are saying, and therefore you would have us all fall into error along with you. You do not know what mental prayer is, nor how vocal prayer ought to be made, nor what contemplation is; for if you did understand, you would not condemn on the one hand, what you praise on the other."

§ 2. Saint Teresa combats the contrary opinion.

As is evident from this passage, Saint Teresa cannot tolerate the idea, that while men are so careful in recollecting themselves when they converse with an earthly sovereign, any one should assert that, in addressing the Eternal King of the universe, it is allowable to recite merely materially the words of a prayer, without *attending interiorly* to what one does and says.

Therefore she begs of the Lord not to permit such an error to prevail; and she declares her belief that those who pretend that prayer uttered merely with the lips is sufficient for a Christian, do not, in fact, know what they say.

§ 3. How vocal and mental prayer should be united.

Saint Teresa then proceeds to show how vocal prayer should be united with mental prayer, and, after a brief passage which shall be quoted later on, she continues thus: "Who can assert that it is wrong if any one, wishing to recite the Hours or the Rosary, should begin by reflecting with whom he is about to speak, and who he himself is who speaks, in order that he may know how he should conduct himself? Now I tell you, that if, before commencing the vocal prayer which you are about to recite, you properly discharge the serious task of knowing and attending to these two points, *you will thereby be spending a good portion of time in mental prayer.* Would we approach to speak with a prince in the same unprepared manner in which we might address a peasant, or a poor person like ourselves, who will take our words in good part no matter how we utter them? Certainly not. And though I am so rude as not to know how to converse with the King of heaven, nevertheless He is so condescending, that He does not on this account refuse to hear me, nor does He deny me access to Him, nor do His guards repulse me. The angels who attend upon Him know well the mind of their

King, who is better pleased with the rudeness of a humble shepherd anxious to express himself better if he but knew how, than with the eloquence of the very wise and learned, however eloquent may be their discourses, if they be unaccompanied by humility.

"But, at the same time, His goodness affords no justification for us to be unmannerly and discourteous. At least, in order to testify our gratitude for His enduring so much unpleasantness as He must experience in admitting to His presence beings so defiled as we are, it is well that we endeavour to understand His purity and who He is. It is true that the moment we appear before Him and draw near to Him we discover who He is. . . . O my Sovereign, Supreme Power, Supreme Goodness, Wisdom itself, without beginning and without end, knowing no bounds to Thy perfections which are infinite and incomprehensible, unfathomable Ocean of wonders, Beauty comprising in Thyself all beauties, Strength itself! O my Jesus! would that it were possible for one to concentrate in himself all the eloquence and the wisdom of the human race, in order to understand properly (as far as it is possible to do so in this world—and that, in reality, is nothing) how to make known in this case some of the many things which might be considered, in order to realise in some slight degree who is this Lord, our sovereign good!

"If, when you draw near Him, you reflect and

consider who *He* is with whom you are going to speak, or are speaking, be assured that, though you were to live your life over a thousand times, you should never succeed in fully realising how this Sovereign deserves to be treated, in whose presence the angels tremble, who rules over all things, who is omnipotent, with whom to wish is to execute. It is right, then, my daughters, that we should endeavour to take delight in these excellencies of our Spouse. . . . Let us endeavour to understand who is His father, what kind of country that is to which He is about to conduct us, what those good things are which He promises to give us, what are His dispositions, how we may best be able to gratify Him, in what we may be able to give Him pleasure, and how we may be able to regulate our will, so as to render it in conformity with His. . . . *To understand these truths, my daughters, is mental prayer. If you wish to continue dwelling on these thoughts, and at the same time to pray vocally, by all means do so; but do not presume to speak with God while thinking of other things.*"

It is thus the Saint teaches us an easy method of combining mental with vocal prayer, so that the latter may not be a mere muttering of words. Before we begin to pray, let us reflect *with whom* we are going to speak, and *what we ourselves are* in the presence of that Infinite Majesty and Goodness to whom we are addressing our petitions. In this manner we shall readily find our

souls absorbed in holy thoughts, which will accompany us during the progress of our vocal prayer, so that it will thus become mental prayer likewise. The entire of the foregoing doctrine is reducible to this single point:—that *while we pray with our lips, we should endeavour to pray with interior attention—to pray with the heart likewise;* and provided we have this interior attention, Saint Teresa is satisfied.

When prayer is thus made with interior attention, it is under every respect well made. The truth of this statement is clearly seen from the passage of Saint Teresa which we omitted in the last section, but which we reproduce here: "Whenever," she says, "I shall have occasion to mention vocal prayer, I shall always consider it as united to mental prayer, in order that no one, my daughters, may excite vain fears in your minds. I know well the consequences of such foolish alarms, for I have suffered somewhat on this account, and therefore I wish that no one should disturb you, since it is injurious to travel along this road in fear. It is of very great importance to know that you are walking securely; for if you tell a traveller that he is not going right and has lost his way, in order to find it again he turns in this direction and in that, and gives himself up entirely to seeking the right road, until he grows weary, wastes his time, and arrives late at his destination."

§ 4. Prayer made with interior attention is prayer well made.

In this extract the Saint says that she wishes

always to speak of vocal as united with mental prayer, in order that her nuns may not be frightened when they hear preachers insisting on the necessity of mental prayer or meditation. For this reason she wishes them to understand that *every prayer which is made with attention comprises in itself mental prayer*—that is to say, meditation of the *simple* kind, which, as we have already seen, is quite sufficient, and just as efficacious as *formal, methodical* meditation. The Saint adds, that she herself was at one time troubled on this score, no doubt by persons who were over-zealous in advocating formal meditation. She wishes, therefore, that each one should travel by the road which suits him best, that is, by that method of prayer for which he has most aptitude, provided it be made with attention and devotion; and she adds that, in acting thus, he need have no fear of walking insecurely, but should be tranquil and refrain from trying other methods.

The entire meaning of the Saint in addressing her nuns thus may be summed up as follows: It may easily happen that you find some book or some persons to excite scruples in your mind regarding your manner of prayer, and to endeavour to draw you to some other method, by telling you that otherwise you will fail to acquire the gift of prayer and Christian perfection. (As a matter of fact there are books and persons that know only one path—their own—and believe all others inferior to it.) If you, says the Saint,

pray with attention to the exercise in which you are engaged, if you endeavour to pray with your hearts so that your petitions may not proceed only from your lips, *do not be uneasy* when you hear it said that there is another better method of prayer, and *do not abandon your own method* to seek another which, though in itself good and excellent, may, nevertheless, be unsuited to you. Continue to pray after your own fashion, with the assurance that you are praying well; otherwise, by forcing yourselves to adopt a different system, *you will grow weary, will waste your time*, and *will succeed too late in acquiring the gift of prayer.*

§ 5. This doctrine is confirmed by Saint John of the Cross.

In confirmation of this teaching, we may here introduce very appropriately the authority of Saint John of the Cross, who represents the Divine Spouse as speaking in the following terms to the soul He has espoused: "If My servants did but attentively consider My ways, they should see that souls are conducted to Me not by one, but by many paths. And if they did but reflect that the heavenly Jerusalem has not one but twelve gates, and that My Father's house contains not one but many mansions, and did but persuade themselves that the soil of their hearts, according as circumstances vary, produces various fruits, they would not weary themselves in the vain endeavour to direct all souls along a single path, and make them enter by a single gate, and lodge them in a single apartment, nor

would they require from all the same fruit. Dost thou not remember that in distributing My talents and My graces, to one I gave a single talent, to another two, and to a third five? It avails not that some of My servants labour in the hope that he who has received from Me but a single talent of prayer should acquire two, and that another should acquire five to whom I have not given more than two. The call which I have given will prevail over that which any servant of Mine can give; and therefore, no matter how My servants may summon souls to travel by a certain road, such efforts will prove fruitless when I invite these souls to walk in a different path."

Wherefore we repeat that souls ought to pursue tranquilly their own path in prayer, being persuaded that *they pray well provided only that they pray from their hearts.* It is, of course, unnecessary to say that prayer made from the heart, that is, with interior attention, does not exclude involuntary distractions, which are inevitable in consequence of the fickleness of man's imagination. We know well that such distractions do not in the slightest degree destroy the value of our prayers.

CHAPTER VI.

Some additional instructions of Saint Teresa regarding vocal prayer.

§ 1. On understanding the meaning of the words.

In the 24th chapter of the *Way of Perfection* Saint Teresa says: "It is reasonable that you should understand what you say. . . . When I say, 'I believe,' it is but right, I think, that I should understand and know what it is I believe; and when I say 'Our Father,' love demands that I should understand who this Father is, and who is the Master that taught us this prayer." Wherefore a devout person ought to endeavour to understand the vocal prayers which he is accustomed to recite, in order to be able to accompany with his mind the meaning of the words. This applies to the ordinary prayers, such as the "Our Father," the "Hail Mary," the "I believe in God," the "Hail, holy Queen," &c., which we may fairly expect all persons, even the illiterate, to understand. As regards other prayers, such as, for instance, the Psalms, we cannot require so much; nevertheless we shall see in the 11th chapter how even these prayers, the meaning of which is not generally understood, may be recited with devotion and much fruit.

Speaking of the "Our Father," the Saint continues to say, in the chapter just quoted: "Now

§ 2. Of attention to the Divine Presence.

when we recite this prayer, God forbid that we should omit to call to mind frequently (even though we should occasionally forget to do so through human weakness), the dear Master who taught it to us, and did so with such a love and desire that we might profit thereby". Wherefore, with regard to this most excellent prayer, Saint Teresa not only wishes that we should understand its meaning, but that we should, moreover, often call to mind our Lord Jesus Christ who has taught it to us. She does not, however, insist on our doing this *on every occasion without exception;* because sometimes involuntary distractions prevent us from remembering this duty, and *against such distractions it is impossible to guard ourselves.*

Saint Teresa wishes, furthermore, that we should be mindful of this Divine Master, by *representing Him to ourselves as a person who is near us,* who hears what we say to Him, and who answers our petitions. "The master," she says, "is never so far from his pupil as that he should have any necessity to call aloud to him, but he is very near. This I wish you to understand, that to recite well the 'Our Father' you must keep close beside the Master who taught it to you." And a little before this passage just quoted, she had said: "Let us be attentive to the answers which the Lord gives to our petitions. Think you that He is silent, though we hear Him not? Be assured that He speaks to

the heart when we pray to Him from the heart."

Wherefore when we recite the "Our Father," or any other prayer, we must not imagine that we are alone, or that the Lord is at a distance from us; but, on the contrary, *we must represent Him to ourselves as being very near us*, just as when a scholar speaks with the master who is teaching him, or as a son speaks with his father, or a friend with a friend. (We shall see, later on, how great and consoling is this idea of our nearness to God.) Animated by this feeling of His near presence, we ought to lay before Him our petitions, waiting patiently until it may please Him to speak by His inspirations to our hearts.

§ 3. Of the solitude suitable to prayer.

In order the better to guard and maintain this attention, Saint Teresa wishes, moreover, that, as a rule, *our prayer should be made in solitude*, where we may speak alone with God: "You already know," she says, "that His Majesty teaches that prayer should be made in solitude; for He Himself always acted thus when He prayed, not indeed through any necessity on His part, but for our instruction".

The same advice is given by Saint John of the Cross, who, speaking of the external accompaniments of prayer, says: "The ceremonies which Jesus Christ taught us to observe in our prayers are reduced to one or other of two; either to retire into our chamber, where, undisturbed by the tumult and presence of men, we

may pray most profitably and with pure heart—*When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret* (Matth. vi. 6)—or to withdraw into lonely and unfrequented places, as He did, in the better and more tranquil hours of the night" (*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, book III., chap. 43).

And even though the practice were not supported by the authoritative teaching of our Divine Lord, our own experience unquestionably tells us, that we pray more attentively and earnestly when we withdraw ourselves from association with men, and retire into solitude, where even the exterior manifestation of our feelings is more free, and where man can abandon himself without reserve to the impulses of the spirit, without being obliged to regulate his actions by any considerations of human respect. There he is free to prostrate himself, to sigh, or to weep as his devotion may prompt: there, so far from being forced to check the fervour of his prayer, he even assists it. There the entire man stands before his God in perfect freedom, as though there were in existence but God and he alone.

And let no one fancy that this teaching discredits the use of public prayer, which has been consecrated by the tradition of the Universal Church, which is so necessary for the common edification of the Faithful, and so efficacious to obtain grace. Public prayer is not only highly commendable, but is even indispensable for a Christian, who is bound to practise religious

observances in the Church; and very nearly the same may be said of prayer made in common in families. Nevertheless, those who wish to be men of prayer must find time not only for both public and common prayer, but also for private prayer made in secret, as far as the circumstances of their state will permit, under the guidance of their Spiritual Director. And let them be persuaded that a little prayer made in solitude, and, so to speak, face to face with God, in which they can give free scope to their affections, will prove of immense advantage to them.

§ 4. Fruit to be derived from the foregoing teaching.

If we reduce to practice what Saint Teresa has been teaching in the preceding sections, we shall certainly derive therefrom the advantage of finding our vocal prayer united to mental prayer as she requires—nay, we shall even find it changed into mental prayer, almost without an effort; for by attending to the sense of the words, and to the Divine Presence as has been explained above, our prayer will proceed more from the heart than from the lips, and therefore it will be more mental than vocal.

Meanwhile, in order that we may not be of the number of those who, when engaged in prayer, are not in the least concerned to attend to what they are doing, and therefore wish only to pray like parrots, we must get rid of every false notion and prejudice which we may have had regarding those words—*meditation* or *mental prayer*. As a matter of fact, there are many

persons who, knowing no other form of meditation or mental prayer but that which is made methodically, divided artificially into points, and measured out to last for a fixed period of time, and who, feeling that this form of meditation is not suited to them, are downcast, and, as it were, frightened, every time they hear these words mentioned. But if they only consider that *substantially* mental prayer and meditation *mean nothing more than attentive and devout prayer*, even though it be made vocally, the grounds for all prejudice and alarm are removed. Let us hear how Saint Teresa goes on to speak of such persons:—"You may say that this is meditation, and that you are neither able nor do you wish to pray otherwise than vocally; for there are to be found impatient and indolent people, who, being unaccustomed to meditation, at first experience a difficulty in recollecting themselves, and therefore, in order to avoid a little trouble, say that they are unable to do anything more than pray vocally. You are quite right in saying that to recollect yourself in presence of your Divine Master is mental prayer; but I assure you very distinctly that I fail to understand how this can be separated from vocal prayer. For if we wish to make vocal prayer well, we must attend to what we are saying, and understand with whom we are speaking,—nay, we are strictly bound to pray with due advertence to the act in which we are engaged." And a little before she had said: "It is impossible to speak with God

and with the world at the same time, as some persons occasionally attempt to do, when on the one hand they are saying the Rosary or other vocal prayer, and on the other are listening to some one who is speaking, or are thinking over any subject that may happen to present itself to their minds". Wherefore in the following chapter (chap. 25), she says: "*Mental prayer is simply what I have told you—that is to say, to consider and attend to the words we are uttering, and to bear in mind who He is with whom we are speaking, and who we ourselves are that presume to address so great a Lord. To reflect upon this and other like matters—such as how little we have served Him, and how much we are bound to serve Him—is mental prayer.* Do not imagine that it is some other unknown tongue, and be not frightened at the mere name."

§ 5. Consoling thoughts for those who suffer from involuntary distractions.

We must, however, observe that Saint Teresa does not wish to excite scruples or to cause anxiety to those who, notwithstanding all their efforts to recollect themselves and to attend properly to their prayers, yet, either through natural disposition or by the permission of God, are much distracted and disturbed, and experience no feeling of devotion. Wherefore she says that one must have the above-mentioned attention to the words which he utters, and must reflect upon the Person whom he is addressing, "*except on some occasions*, when, however much one may strive, he cannot do so, either

because of some evil bodily humours (more especially if a person be of a melancholy temperament), or through weakness of mind, or, finally, because God permits certain periods of great trial to come upon His servants for their greater good. For on such occasions, no matter how they may be afflicted on account of their condition, and endeavour to keep themselves calm, they are unable to do so; nor do they, despite all their endeavours, attend to what they are saying, nor are they able to fix their understanding upon anything, but it seems to be quite distracted, so confused and disordered does it appear to be. However, from the pain which such persons experience from this condition of affairs, it is easily seen that they are not responsible for it. But let not the person who is thus afflicted fret because of it, since that is still worse; nor let him tire himself in trying to reduce his understanding to reason, since, for the time being, it is incapaple of it; *but let him simply pray as best he can.*" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 24.)

Wherefore Saint Teresa does not wish that we should be troubled because of involuntary distractions and mental trials during the time of prayer. *When we do our best to pray devoutly and attentively, we do all that God requires of us;* and if after this we do not succeed, *God is satisfied with our good desire.* Let us pray, then, *as best we can*, and let us not be in the least troubled if it should seem to us that we pray

badly. Indeed Saint Teresa is so discreet, that when we cannot pray as we ought, because of physical debility, melancholy, or the temptations of the devil, *she counsels us not to force ourselves to pray at all* at such times, but to give our soul some repose by employing ourselves in other virtuous acts. "Let him," she says, speaking of the victim of distractions and mental trials, "leave off praying, and endeavour to give his soul, as being infirm, some repose by attending to other virtuous acts". (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 24).

Again, in the 11th chapter of her *Life*, she says that this difficulty and this inability to pray "very frequently proceed from corporal illness; for we are so wretched, that this poor imprisoned soul of ours shares the miseries of the body, and is influenced by the changes of the seasons. The humours of the body are also often the cause why, without any fault of our own, the soul is unable to do as she would wish, but suffers in many ways; *and in all such cases the more we try to* FORCE *the soul, the worse does she become, and the longer does the evil last.* There is need of discretion, therefore, to know when the inability to pray proceeds from such causes, in order that we may not suffocate the poor soul . . . which is placed in such a trying position, and cannot do all that she would wish to do, because she has the misfortune to be united to such a bad companion as is the body. . . . There are many other external occupations, such

as works of charity, reading, and the like, with which we may at such times occupy the soul; and even though sometimes the soul should be indisposed for these occupations, let her then serve the body for the love of God, in order that on many future occasions the body may serve her. Let the person so afflicted seek recreation in pious conversation, or in taking healthful exercise in the open air, as his confessor may counsel. . . . We may serve God in everything: His yoke is sweet; and the important consideration is, not to drag along the soul violently, but to guide her sweetly, for her greater good and profit."

§ 6. Caution against overmuch self-love.

We must, however, be on our guard lest a reprehensible self-love should cause us to leave off prayer without *real necessity*. The cases in which, through weakness, or lowness of spirits, or interior trials, we must be content to pray *as best we can* will probably be *frequent*, because human infirmity is great. But the cases in which we may be forced to *abandon prayer altogether* will always be *very rare;* because, as a general rule, we shall be able to pray in one way or other, and either for a long or a brief period. Saint Teresa takes this for granted when she says: *Except on some occasions, when either on account of some evil bodily humours, &c.*, by which words she means a *real* natural inability, or a special disposition of God. Indeed Saint Teresa, though exceedingly discreet, is most decidedly opposed to *overmuch*

self-love. In the 4th chapter, she says: "Love of our bodies and prayer cannot go hand in hand". And in the 11th chapter, she again says: "It is strange how this body of ours loves to be well treated, and how when it has any plausible excuse, however trivial may be the necessity, it deceives the poor soul and hinders her improvement. . . . If we did but commence to subdue and to punish these wretched bodies of ours, they would not trouble us so much. . . . How often has our body made fools of us?" And in the preceding chapter, she had already said: "The moment we fancy that we have a headache, we refrain from going to choir, which surely is not likely to kill us. One day we refrain from going there because our head aches; the next day, because it has ached; and then we remain away for three other days, lest it may ache." She then goes on to complain at length of several like ridiculous excuses, which proceed from overmuch self-love.

Let us conclude, then, that vocal prayer, which with the divine assistance is easy for all and capable of raising us up to the most sublime degree of perfection, ought to be *a recollected prayer*, in which we must imagine ourselves at the side of our Divine Master, attending to what we say to Him, and awaiting the answer which He may send us by His holy inspirations. This will be *vocal and mental prayer combined.* It will not be an empty sound of words, but a substantial harmony of affections, whereby we will

give much pleasure to God, while working out the sanctification of your own souls.

CHAPTER VII.

Method of keeping ourselves in the presence of the Divine Master while we are engaged in prayer.

§ 1. Of reviving our faith in God's presence.

In the 25th chapter of her *Way of Perfection*, Saint Teresa exhorts her nuns in these terms: "Since you are alone when engaged in prayer, endeavour, my daughters, to obtain some company. Now what better company can you have than that very Master who has taught you the prayer that you are going to say? Represent to yourselves this same Lord as present with you, and observe with what love and humility He teaches you, and (trust to my experience), as long as it is in your power, do not remain apart from so good a friend. If you accustom yourselves to have Him near you, and He sees that you do it with affection, and that you constantly aim at giving Him pleasure, you cannot, as the saying is, get rid of Him. He will never be absent from you: He will help you, and you will find Him with you in all places. Do you consider it a small matter to have such a friend as this ever at your side? O my sisters! let those

amongst you who cannot pray much with the understanding, nor keep your thoughts fixed without distractions, accustom yourselves to this. Remember, I know that you *can* do it; for I have myself passed many years under this cross of not being able to fix my thoughts quietly upon one thing. And truly it is a very great affliction; but I know that the Lord does not abandon us so entirely, that if we approach Him with humility and ask the favour of Him He will refuse to accompany us. And even though we should not succeed in obtaining this favour in a year, we shall obtain it in several years, and let us not grudge to spend time on a matter in which our time will be so well employed. Who is there to hurry us in this affair? I say that we may accustom ourselves to this, and labour to get near this true Master."

The Saint, therefore, teaches that in order to secure to ourselves the company of the Divine Master while we pray, we must imagine to ourselves that we have Him near us—that we have Him with us in the very spot where we are, and we must imagine that He is actually instructing and teaching us in a most affable and loving manner, as our Lord really does by His lights, inspirations, and interior touches of divine grace. She assures us that if we humbly ask Him for this grace of accompanying us in our prayer, He will do so, and that consequently we shall always feel His divine presence, in such a manner that *we will be unable to drive Him from us, and will*

find Him beside us in all places. Nevertheless, we must not expect to acquire this sense of the divine presence in a few days. Even though it should require more than a year's practice to do so, the time would be most profitably employed in acquiring so great a treasure.

§ 2. How we may easily accustom ourselves to the practice of realising the Divine Presence.

In the 26th chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, Saint Teresa continues thus: "I do not now require of you to meditate on Him, or to form many fine ideas, or to make high and curious considerations with your understanding: I require of you merely to look upon Him. Now what prevents you from turning the eyes of your soul towards this Lord, even for a very brief moment, if you should be incapable of doing more than this? If you can look upon very ugly objects, how cannot you look upon the most beautiful object that imagination can picture to itself? If *He* do not appear beautiful to you, I give you leave not to look upon Him. Your Spouse, my daughters, never takes His eyes from off you. He has endured a thousand abominations committed by you against Him, and yet they have not been sufficient to make Him cease looking upon you. Will it then be any great sacrifice on your part to take your eyes off these external objects, and cast a look sometimes upon Him? Remember that, as the Spouse says, He stands waiting for nothing else but that we look upon Him."

Therefore this exercise of the presence of God

cannot appear to us very difficult. As a matter of fact, by an effort of our imagination, we are continually in the habit of representing to ourselves as present even distant objects; as, for example, when we picture to ourselves that we have present before us some dear friend or relative, and fancy that we are speaking with him and that he answers us. And sometimes we become so absorbed in this thought, that we no longer pay any attention to matters which are passing before our very eyes, but think that we are actually engaged with our friend or relative, and we discourse with him as though we had him really present. In the same manner a vain woman pictures to her mind that beautiful dress, those precious ornaments which she wishes to have, and in thought she sees them, she dwells upon them, and takes pleasure in them. So, too, as the Saint observes, our imagination sometimes represents to us filthy objects which we ought instantly to cast out of our mind, and now and again it costs us a great effort to cast them out, so vividly are they presented to our imagination. Now *why cannot we in like manner imagine that we have our Divine Saviour present with us when we are engaged in prayer?* With reason, then, does the Saint say that if we were to assert our inability to do so, she would refuse to believe us, because she knows, as a matter of fact, that it is entirely within our power.

Saint Teresa continues (chap. 26): "You will find Him under whatever aspect you may wish

for Him. He so desires that we should cast our eyes upon Him, that He will not be wanting on His part. It is said that if a woman wish to live happily in the married state and to be in agreement with her husband, she must do as he does: if he be melancholy, she, too, must wear an appearance of sadness; if he be gay, she also must seem gay, even though she may not be so in reality. It is thus in truth, without any exaggeration, that the Lord acts with us; for He makes Himself the subject, and would have you be the master, while in everything He endeavours to favour your love. If you be cheerful, contemplate Him as risen from the dead; for merely to imagine how He came forth from the sepulchre will fill your heart with joy. Oh, with what splendour, with what beauty, with what grandeur, with what majesty, how victoriously, how joyfully He arose!—like one who had gloriously returned from the battle where He had won so great a kingdom, which He wishes should be entirely yours. Is it much, then, that you should once turn your eyes upon Him who gives so much to you?

§ 3. Of the various ways in which we may represent to ourselves the Divine Master.

"If you be sad and troubled, contemplate Him as He prayed in the garden, and consider what immense sorrow then filled His soul, since, though He was patience itself, He manifested this sorrow and complained of it. Contemplate Him bound to the pillar, full of pains, all His flesh torn to pieces because of the great love He

bore you; persecuted by some, spat upon by others, denied by His friends, and abandoned by them without any one to defend Him, stiff with cold, and placed in such solitude that you may easily exchange consoling words with Him. Or, again, consider Him with the cross upon His shoulders, entirely weighed down by it, so that His enemies would not even allow Him to take breath. He, in turn, will look upon you with those eyes of His so beautiful and compassionate, filled with tears, and He will forget His own griefs to console you in yours, being solely anxious that you should go to solace yourself with Him, and turn your eyes to look upon Him. If such a sight should soften your heart, and you are not only anxious to look upon Him but are also delighted to speak with Him—not in a set form of prayer, but in words gushing from your heart which He values exceedingly—you may say to Him: 'O Lord of the universe! my true Spouse, dost Thou find Thyself in such straits, my Lord and my God, as to be willing to admit such wretched company as mine? I perceive by Thy looks that Thou art pleased with me: but how is it possible, Lord, that the angels should leave Thee alone, and that not even Thy Father should comfort Thee? If it is a fact, my Lord, that Thou art willing to suffer all this for me, how contemptible is the little that I suffer for Thee! Of what do I complain? Ah! I blush for shame at seeing Thee in such a state, and I resolve, O Lord, to suffer for Thy sake all the afflictions

which may come upon me: I wish to accept them as a great blessing, in order to imitate Thee in something. Let us go together, Lord. Wherever *You* go, I will follow: wherever You pass along, I wish to pass also.'

"My daughters, bear your portion of this cross, in order that your Lord may not perform His journey with so much pain. Be not troubled because the Jews cross your path, and heed not what may be said of you: turn a deaf ear to their accusations, and, falling with your Spouse, do not part from the cross or leave it. Consider attentively the weariness with which He walks, and how far His sufferings exceed yours, no matter how great you may fancy your own to be, or how much you may feel them, and you will be consoled thereby, and will come to see that they are a mere trifle when compared with the sufferings of our Lord.

"You may say, my sisters, 'How possibly can this be done at present?—that if you had seen Him with your corporal eyes at the time when his Divine Majesty lived upon this earth, then you would willingly have done all this, and would have never ceased looking upon Him'. This is a delusion: because he who prays and is unwilling to make an effort to recollect himself, so as to contemplate this Divine Lord within his soul (and this he may do without risk, and merely by a very moderate diligence), would have been far more unwilling, indeed, to station himself at the foot of the cross with Magdalen,

who saw death staring her in the face. Oh! what must have been the sufferings of the glorious Virgin-Mother and of this blessed Saint! What threats were to be endured by them! what foul words! what rude jostling! what affronts! But what else could have been expected at the hands of such a hellish crew—the ministers of Satan? Without doubt their sufferings must have been terrible; but crushed by the sorrow which they felt for Another, they did not feel their own. Wherefore, sisters, do not delude yourselves by imagining that you would have been disposed to endure such great sufferings, if you are not now disposed to undertake mere trifling troubles; yet by exercising yourselves in these, you may be able to endure other greater trials."

What the Saint says in this passage is well worthy of attention, namely, that when we turn the eyes of our soul upon the Lord, we shall find Him such as we desire to find Him—joyful, if we are in a joyous mood; sad, if we are sad; and so on of the rest. Wherefore, when we are filled with sentiments of interior joy, should we wish to find the Spouse of our souls in a corresponding mood, in order that we may the better refer our joyous feelings to Him and enjoy them in Him, we can procure for ourselves this pleasure by reflecting on His glorious Resurrection or on His Transfiguration on Thabor, when we shall find Him overflowing with joy, and on beholding Him in such glory we will rejoice with

Him. Or, again, should we be seized with feelings of sadness and find ourselves bowed down by trouble and pain, and should we desire in such circumstances to see our Spouse suffering with us in order to sustain our patience and encourage us to suffer cheerfully for Him, we may find Him plunged in the depths of the most profound sorrow by contemplating Him as He sweats blood in the garden, as He drags His steps painfully along the road to Calvary, as He writhes in agony under the lashes of those who scourge Him, and the cruelties of those who crown Him with thorns and nail Him to the Cross.

Again, if, terrified by the greatness of our sins, we wish to excite within ourselves sentiments of confidence, we shall find our Lord in a most reassuring mood, if we contemplate Him in the act of permitting Magdalen to embrace His most holy feet, while at the same moment He pardons her every crime. If we be tepid, and are anxious to stir up in our souls sentiments of burning love, let us contemplate our Lord in the act of instituting the Blessed Sacrament in the Supper Hall, and He will kindle in us a fire of charity capable of inflaming the coldest hearts. Whereupon, as the Saint remarks, feeling our heart touched and softened, it will be easy to address Him in the language of joy or of sorrow, of confidence or of love, without employing any studied expressions, but in the simple and spontaneous words that will spring from the affections of our hearts.

§ 4. How we may assist ourselves in thus representing to our minds the Divine Master

Saint Teresa continues: "In order to help yourselves in this, you may have with you some image or representation of this Divine Lord which pleases you, not, indeed, merely to wear it on your bosom without ever looking at it, but to speak often to Him whom it represents, for He will suggest to you what you are to say to Him. If you can find words to speak with others, why should you want them now to speak with God? Do not believe that such a thing can occur. I, at least, will not believe it possible, if you but accustom yourselves to it; but if you do not acquire the habit of it, words will, no doubt, fail you. For to abstain from conversing with a person produces a certain reserve, and a hesitation as to how we should address him, to such a degree that it might even appear as though the person were a perfect stranger to us, while in reality he might be a relative, since kinship and friendship are soon forgotten where mutual intercourse has been interrupted.

"It is likewise an excellent plan to take up a good book, written in your own language, in order the better to concentrate your thoughts and pray well vocally, and by degrees to accustom the soul thereto by little pleasing artifices, that she may not be alarmed. Take into account that the poor soul is like a spouse for many years separated from her lord, and that it requires great skill to know how to treat her in order to induce her to return to his house and dwell with

him. So it is with us, sinners; we have so accustomed our souls and thoughts to follow their own pleasure (or, to speak more correctly, their own pain), that the wretched soul does not realise her condition, and, consequently, in order to make her return and take delight in living in the house of her spouse, there is need of great skill; and unless such skill be employed, and employed gradually, we shall never obtain the desired result. Once more I assure you that if you diligently accustom yourselves to what I have said, you will derive therefrom greater profit than I could express in words, even if I tried to do so.

"Place yourselves, then, close beside this good Master, firmly resolved to learn what He shall teach you; and if you but do so, His Divine Majesty will cause you to become excellent scholars, nor will He forsake you unless you forsake Him. Weigh well the words uttered by that divine mouth; for by the very first of them you will immediately understand the love He bears you. And it is no small happiness and consolation for a scholar to know that his master loves him" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 26).

It will prove of great advantage then, as Saint Teresa remarks, *to provide ourselves with some favourite image or likeness of the Saviour, in order that we may speak often with Him.* Because, more especially in the beginning, when we may not find it so easy to look upon Him with the eyes of the soul, we will often look upon His image with our corporal eyes; and this will serve to

impress His loving image deeply on our minds, so that, afterwards, we may easily be able to contemplate Him within us; and meanwhile we thus learn to be recollected with Him and to speak with Him, as Saint Teresa would wish.

Such an image should, however, be in accordance with *our own peculiar taste*, that is, such as is calculated to excite us to sentiments of great piety. For, in whatever relates to spiritual matters, even material things ought to be such as may content and satisfy the soul; and we ought to make no account of the mere value of the material or of the skill with which they are wrought—accessories which often tend rather to produce distractions and prevent devotion, while they cannot afford any satisfaction to a really pious soul which finds no nourishment in vanities. "As to images," says Saint John of the Cross, "let us never dwell upon their artistic merits, so as to have more confidence in some than in others on this account, for to do so would be great ignorance; let us esteem those the most by which our devotion is best excited" (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, book III., chap. 35).

Again, *a good book written in our own language will be an excellent means to recollect our thoughts and to enable us afterwards to pray well vocally;* because every good sentiment that we draw from it serves to put us on the track of prayer, and enables us to continue therein with satisfaction.

In fine, we must help ourselves by every possible means to attain a close degree of familiarity

with our Divine Spouse. And very justly does Saint Teresa compare our soul, while it is still the slave of worldly affections, to a bride that is separated from her husband and for many years has lived apart from him. If she desires to return to her husband and to remain evermore with him, as is her duty, she must labour to win back his lost love and to acquire a liking for his home, which is her home also. If she does not take such precautions, either she will not at all return to her husband's house, or, should she do so, she will not remain there long, but, growing weary of it, will again abandon it.

It is, furthermore, worthy of remark, that Saint Teresa does not believe that words will fail us to speak with God in prayer, unless, indeed, this should happen through our not cultivating a habit of prayer; because, *to abstain from conversing with a person causes a certain reserve, and a hesitation as to how we should address him, to such a degree that it might even appear as though the person were a perfect stranger to us, while in reality he might be a relative.* Let us then acquire a *habit* of speaking with our Lord, and let us by degrees *accustom our soul to it*, employing even for this purpose *pleasing artifices, so that the soul may not be alarmed.*

Oh, how easily is the soul alarmed when she is forgetful of her Divine Lord, who is her only treasure! It would seem impossible; and yet so great is human blindness that we daily see some soul standing aloof from an intimate union

with God, through fearing to approach too near Him by a life of recollection and prayer, though she hears His loving voice which never ceases to call out to her: *Approach.*

But oftentimes great evil results likewise from impatience, when one wishes to arrive at this union, as it were, by a bound, instead of by a continued and gradual effort, which is generally necessary. In such cases, the soul that is impatient of toil and of delay fancies that she can never reach the goal of her wishes, and, abandoning prayer altogether, she turns aside from the path on which she had entered. This, as we have seen above, is the result which Saint Teresa fears most of all. *Let the soul be very resolute, but let her not grudge to spend time on a matter in which time will be so profitably employed. Who is there to hurry us on in this affair?* We must proceed, as the Saint tells us, *gradually*, and *if we do not, we shall never succeed.* But *if we do proceed gradually, and diligently acquire the habit of doing that which she has counselled us to do, we shall derive therefrom advantages so great that she could not enumerate them, even though she were to try to do so.*

§ 5. We must not do violence to ourselves in endeavouring to realise the presence of the Divine Master.

While Saint Teresa impresses upon us that we should be diligent in endeavouring to obtain so great a blessing as is a lively sense of the presence of our Divine Master during the time of prayer; while she exhorts us not to be deterred by any difficulty, and to

advance resolutely in the path on which we have entered; we must observe that she would not have us make any violent efforts of the imagination, in order to acquire and preserve this sense of the divine presence. She is very far from wishing that we should make efforts which might prove injurious to us, and which, instead of assisting, would impede devotion. She merely requires of us *a little attention of a natural, quiet kind*, by means of which we *would turn the eyes of the soul towards her Divine Master, even for a brief while.* Therefore all that she requires is, that when we go to pray we should imagine that we have our loving Redeemer beside us, that we should cast an occasional look upon Him—that is to say, remember His divine presence—and without any violent effort of imagination, frequently beseech Him, with great humility, to grant us the grace of knowing how to look well upon Him with the eyes of faith. By frequently practising these simple acts of recollection and attention to His divine presence, we shall find, sooner or later—*in a year, or even more*, as it shall please God—that we have acquired the habit of the presence of our Divine Master, and we shall rejoice therein in an abundance of light and of peace.*

* Saint Peter of Alcantara composed a beautiful prayer to obtain this grace (*Prayer to implore the love of God*). It is as follows:—"Since one of the things which please Thee most and appeal most successfully to Thy heart, is that we should have eyes which know how to look upon

CHAPTER VIII.

On the intimacy of our union with God.

THERE is not the slightest doubt that any one who has already acquired some little love of God, will not refuse the sweet company of his Divine Master during the time of prayer, and will be ready to labour to acquire the habit of imagining Him present, so as to enjoy the consoling society of his Beloved: just as we see that earthly lovers, when separated by space, contrive to live together in imagination, and imagination

§ 1. Of the real presence of God in our soul.

Thee, give me, O Lord, those eyes mild and dove-like, chaste and modest, devout and tearful, eyes attentive and quick to know and to execute Thy will; so that when I look upon Thee with those eyes, Thou, in turn, mayest look upon me with those eyes of Thine with which Thou didst look upon Peter, when Thou didst make him weep for his sins; with those eyes which Thou didst cast upon the Prodigal Son, when Thou didst go forth to meet him and gavest him the kiss of peace; with those eyes with which Thou didst look upon the Publican, when he dared not to raise his own eyes to heaven; with those eyes with which Thou didst look upon Magdalen, when she washed Thy feet with her tears; and finally with those eyes with which Thou didst look upon the Spouse of the Canticle when Thou didst say: 'How beautiful art thou, my love! thy eyes are dove's eyes'; so that being pleased with the beauty of my soul, Thou mayest adorn it with those virtues and those graces which will make it appear still more beautiful in Thy sight."

thus in some degree supplies that happiness of which distance deprives them.

But how happy would the soul be, if, in addition to acquiring the company of the Eternal God by means of the imagination, it could also enjoy to some small extent the reality, and find itself truly united to Him. This would, indeed, be supreme good fortune, and would be worth more than all those pious representations of God which we could possibly bring before our minds by efforts of the imagination. Oh, that one could converse in prayer with God really present, and not merely approach Him in thought, but press Him to the heart with affection! This would be truly to enjoy the company of the Divine Master, and such prayer would be indeed recollected, fervent, and devout.

And yet Saint Teresa expressly teaches, that, if we but wish it, we may converse in prayer with God really present. She teaches us that in whatever place we pray, we not only have Him near us, we not only have Him by our side as a pupil has his master, but that, moreover, we have Him *within us*, in our heart, in our soul; that He is there continually, and that, consequently, if we seek Him there we shall find Him there really present. Now this is a most consoling doctrine, which is not merely the teaching of Saint Teresa, or of any other master of the spiritual life, but is the teaching of the Catholic Church, believed and professed by every one, although, through want of reflection, many do not pay heed to it. Let

us first hear what Saint Teresa says on the subject, and then we shall make the Catholic doctrine plain to the understanding of every one. "It is often of the greatest importance," writes Saint Teresa, "that you should understand this truth, namely, that God dwells within you, and that there we should dwell with Him. . . . Let us not imagine that the interior of our heart is empty . . . for if we but remember that we have within us such a guest, I regard it as impossible that we should be so attached to the things of this world" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 28). And to understand how God is always present in our soul, let us listen to Saint John of the Cross, another distinguished master of the Science of the Saints: "In order to know how to find this Bridegroom, we must bear in mind that the Word, the Son of God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is hidden in essence and in presence in the inmost being of the soul. . . . And this is why Saint Augustine speaking to God said: *I did not find Thee without, O Lord, because I had no right to seek Thee there, for Thou art within.* God is therefore hidden within the soul" (*A Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 1).

§ 2. We must distinguish three kinds of the presence of God.

Saint John of the Cross continues later on to explain this more at length, remarking that God may be present in the soul in three different ways: "To explain this" he says, "it must be observed that there are three ways in which God is present in the soul. The first is His presence

in essence, and in this respect He dwells not only in souls that are good and holy, but likewise in those that are bad and sinful, and indeed in all creatures; for it is this presence that gives them life and being, and if it were once withdrawn, they would cease to exist and would return to their original nothing. Now this kind of presence never fails in the soul. The second manner of God's presence is by grace, when He dwells in the soul pleased and satisfied with it. This presence of God is not in all souls, because those who commit a mortal sin lose it. . . . The third kind of presence of God is by means of spiritual affection; for God is wont to show His presence in many devout souls in divers ways of refreshment, joy, and gladness" (*Ibid.* stanza 1).

Of the first of these three manners of divine presence, Saint Paul says: "*In Him we live and move and be*" (Acts xvii. 28). Of the second, our Lord says: "*If any one love Me, they will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him*" (St. John xiv. 23). Of the third kind David said: "*How great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee! . . . Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy face, from the disturbance of men*" (Psalm xxx. 20, 21). The soul shares the first kind of God's presence in common with all other creatures, and may possess it though deprived of all real goodness. The second, which, by reason of sanctifying grace, it has in

common with the angels, enriches it with an infinite treasure—namely, the friendship of God, and to be His child. The third kind of presence causes the soul to experience in some degree a foretaste of the delights of heaven, and when it enjoys this kind of divine presence, there is no need to teach it how to pray, nor to exhort it to do so. The Holy Spirit then teaches the soul sweetly, and prayer spontaneously goes up from it to heaven, warm and fragrant as the perfume of the incense from the burning censer.

Of the first kind of divine presence we never can be deprived. The second we must procure for ourselves with all the powers of our soul, and we must guard it at any cost. The third is not within our power: God gives it to whom He pleases, and when and how He pleases; so that He sometimes denies it to the holiest soul, while giving it abundantly to one that is less holy, although every pious soul occasionally experiences it in some degree.

§ 3. This teaching is made still clearer by another passage from Saint John of the Cross.

Saint John of the Cross, in the last stanza of the *Living Flame of Love*, speaks of this presence of God in the soul; and since his words in this passage carry with them even greater light and consolation, it is well to reproduce them here: "It must be borne in mind that God dwells secretly and by His essence in every soul, because were it otherwise they could not exist. This dwelling of God, however, is very different in different souls: in some He dwells alone, in

others not; in some He dwells contented, in others displeased; in some as in His own house giving His orders, and regulating everything, in others as a stranger in a house not His own, where He is not permitted to command or to do anything at all. Where personal desires and selfish feelings least abound, there is He most alone, there He is most contented, there He dwells as in His own house ruling and directing it, and he dwells there no less secretly than alone."

And since, in this passage just quoted, the Saint is speaking of a soul far advanced in perfection, he continues thus: "Wherefore in a soul of this kind, wherein no worldly desire dwells, and out of which all images and forms of created things have been cast, the Beloved dwells most secretly Himself, and the purer the soul, and the greater its estrangement from everything but God, the more intimate is His converse and the closer His embrace. He continues thus secret; for the devil himself cannot penetrate this secrecy, nor can any intellect discover the manner of this most close union. But, at the same time, in this secrecy He is not hidden from the soul itself which has reached this degree of perfection, for such a soul is always conscious of His presence. . . . . Oh, how blessed is that soul which feels God ever present, reposing within it and taking pleasure in it! How suitable it is for such a soul to live in perfect retirement, far from all distracting business, and

enjoying absolute tranquillity, so that nothing whatever shall disturb the repose of the Beloved! There He ordinarily remains as it were asleep in the embraces of the soul, and the soul is conscious of His presence, and as a general rule enjoys no small fruition of it." He says afterwards that "God dwells secretly in other souls which have not attained to such a perfect degree of union, not indeed displeased, though they are not as yet perfectly disposed for union. Such souls, as a rule, are not conscious of His presence, except during occasional intervals of sweet awakenings with which He favours them." In the case of these sweet awakenings of which the Saint speaks, even those souls that are not yet perfect enjoy the third manner of the divine presence.

But those perfect souls which habitually enjoy that divine repose spoken of above, and the tranquil embrace of their Beloved, likewise enjoy habitually the third kind of the presence of God. It must however be observed that, in the case of such souls, that perfect state of repose is occasionally interrupted by other manifestations of the divine presence immeasurably more wonderful, which are so unspeakably delightful, being as it were foretastes of Paradise, that human nature could not of itself support them, and one would expire under their influence were not life miraculously preserved by God. To obtain some idea of them, read the explanation of the stanza from the *Living Flame of Love* quoted

above (p. 77), where St John of the Cross, who knew by experience the nature of these awakenings and manifestations, writes in a truly heavenly strain about them.

§ 4. Encouragment and consolation to be drawn from this teaching.

Returning to the original scope of this chapter, we must, then, bear in mind that every Christian knows that he has his God near him—nay, more, *within him*—and that he must not seek Him elsewhere when he wishes to hold converse with Him. Now this belief is most encouraging to every sinner who is anxious to be converted, while, at the same time, it affords a very great sense of security and consolation to the just soul.

If one is a sinner who is anxious to be converted, let him picture himself as another Magdalen at the feet of Christ, who, if he weep over and detest his sins, will speedily obtain that mercy which he desires. And surely it is not necessary that the sinner should go elsewhere to seek his Saviour and his Physician. Let him seek Him *within his own heart*, for there He will be found, most willing to free him from the bonds of sin and to heal his wounds. Let him turn his eyes inwards upon his Saviour, who dwells within him, and pour forth his prayers and his entreaties to Him as He lies reposing there. Let him shed tears of compunction before Him, and promise future amendment of life; and from out of his own heart he will hear a voice saying in reply: "*Thy sins are forgiven thee*" (Luke vii. 48)—a

voice inexpressibly loving, which will encourage him to trample on all human respect, to break off all evil habits, and to present himself at the tribunal of penance with excellent dispositions for receiving sacramental absolution.

Again, the faith in the presence of our good God in the interior of our own hearts, will be a great consolation and a pledge of security to the Christian who feels within himself the testimony of a good conscience, and who can entertain a well-grounded hope that he is free from mortal sin, and therefore enriched with the treasure of God's grace—the friend, the child, the spouse of God. Such a one is conscious that he is united to his God by another union which is infinitely precious. Under the veil of faith, he possesses the self-same presence of the Infinite Good which is vouchsafed unveiled to the angels in glory. As a child lives with the best of fathers, as a bride with a dear spouse, so he lives with God—his Father and his beloved one—the true Strength, the true Wisdom, the true Glory, the Infinite Goodness. How joyful must this presence of God be to the Christian soul in the midst of the troubles of this earthly exile! what security must it afford amidst the world's perils! Many a time will such a soul say to its Beloved with the Prophet: "*It is good for me to adhere to my God; Thy comforts have given joy to my soul; if armies in camp should stand together against me my heart shall not fear*" (Ps. lxxii. 29; xciii. 19; xxvi. 3).

From this second manner of God's presence there will occasionally follow the presence of the third kind—an experience of exceeding great happiness, in which the soul "*will rejoice in God its Saviour*" (Luke i. 47), and will sometimes enjoy those loving communications which Saint John of the Cross calls "*interior feasts of the Holy Ghost*".

§ 5. Exhortation to the soul to seek God within itself.

Yet with all this, there are many persons who never look for their God except at a distance from them, either in heaven or in the Blessed Sacrament, without ever thinking to seek Him *within their own hearts*, though He is really present there, and there they may at any moment find Him, throw themselves into His arms, press Him to their bosom, and repose in Him. Let them, by all means, seek Him in heaven, and thither let them direct all their hopes and desires, for it is in heaven that He will make them sharers of His eternal glory. Let them, by all means, seek Him in the Blessed Sacrament, for it is there He distributes the inexhaustible riches of His love; but let them seek Him also *within their own hearts*, where it has pleased Him to take up His abode, and where He ought not to be left alone.

Let us once again hear Saint Teresa recounting some of her own early experiences: "I knew well," she says, "that I had a soul; but I did not understand the dignity of this soul, nor who it was that lodged within it, because my

eyes were blinded by the vanities of this life, so that I did not see Him. I believe that had I then known, as I know now, that in this little palace of my soul there is lodged so great a King, I would not have left Him alone so often. Sometimes, at least, I should have kept Him company; I should have tarried with Him; and I should have endeavoured to make my soul more pure for His reception" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 28).

Let us also hear Saint John of the Cross, who writes as follows: "O thou soul, most beautiful of all creatures, who longest so earnestly to know the place where thy Beloved tarries, that thou mayest seek Him and be united to Him! behold He tells thee that *thou art thyself the secret chamber in which He dwells*, the retreat in which He is hidden. In truth it is for thee a matter of great consolation and joy to see that thy sole Good and Hope is so near thee, that He dwells in thee . . . . Rejoice, then, with Him, and be glad with interior recollection, seeing thou hast Him so near. Here love Him, here desire Him, and do not go out of thyself to seek Him" (*A Spiritual Canticle*, stanza 1).

§ 6. Fruit to be gathered from the teaching contained in this chapter.

Let us, then, gather the following fruit from our faith in God's presence within our hearts. First of all, let us endeavour, as far as our human weakness will permit, frequently to keep company with a guest so generous, who has taken up His abode within us, not because *He*

has any need of us, but to supply the pressing need which *we* have of Him, and to enrich us with every blessing. And we *do* truly keep Him company when we bear Him in mind, when we attend to His presence, and take counsel with Him concerning our affairs with that intimate familiarity which ought to exist between a father and his child, between two friends living in the same house.

In the second place, let us endeavour to keep the lodging itself as clean as possible, that is, to keep our soul pure from all defilement and sin. He who dwells within us is essential sanctity and purity, and He very justly desires that His dwelling-place should be pure and holy. This anxiety on our part to attend to Him, not to leave Him alone, to keep His dwelling-place clean and becoming, as far as it lies in our power to do so, will be extremely pleasing to Him, and we shall see immense and priceless blessings bestowed upon us in consequence thereof. Of these blessings, however, we will say nothing just now, since we shall have to speak of them in another chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

How we may be able to help ourselves in realising the presence of God within our souls, by means of some pious reflections.

THE better to enliven and nourish our faith in

§ 1. The soul of the house of God.

the presence of God within our souls, it will be useful, at least in the beginning, to assist ourselves by means of some pious considerations which are capable of affording us both much light and consolation. We shall set down in the first place the consideration put forward for this purpose by Saint Teresa in the 28th chapter of her *Way of Perfection*. "Let us speak a little," she says, "as to the manner by which we may accustom ourselves to so good a method of proceeding. Let us remember, then, that there is within us a palace of indescribable magnificence, built entirely of gold and precious stones, in a manner suitable to so great a Lord. Remember, also, that you are yourself partly the cause why this edifice is so magnificent as it really is (for there is no building so magnificent as a soul that is pure and filled with virtues, and the greater these virtues are, the more do the precious stones sparkle), and that in this palace is lodged the great King who has been pleased to become your guest; and that He is seated there on a throne of priceless value, which is your heart. This may at first seem ridiculous (I mean to make use of such a figure in order to render my meaning intelligible to you), but, nevertheless, it may prove of great assistance especially *to you;* for since we women are not learned, all this is in truth necessary to make us understand that there is within us something that is incomparably more precious than what we see outwardly."

Remark how the Saint says in this extract that the consideration there set forth may prove very helpful *especially* to women, for she well knew that it may prove of assistance to men also, and even to learned men. But let us examine how appropriate is this comparison of our soul to a palace, as set forth by Saint Teresa.

First of all, we must recognise the soul to be the *house of God*, since God Himself represents it to us under this figure. Thus, in the Canticle, God represents Himself as standing at the door of this house, and knocking that we may open to Him: "*I sleep and my heart watcheth the voice of my beloved knocking: open to me, my sister, my love, my undefiled*" (Cant. cap. v. 2). And the soul, having heard the knock of His divine hand, and the loving invitation of His voice, says: "*I arose up to open to my beloved*" (*Ibid.* v. 5). And again, in the Apocalypse, we read: "*Behold I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me*" (Apoc. iii. 20). Wherefore we must regard the soul as the house or palace of its beloved Lord.

We must also represent to ourselves this palace as entirely built of gold and ornamented with precious stones; because the soul ought to be entirely covered with the gold of divine love, and enriched with all the gems of the other holy virtues. We must, moreover, take cognisance of the fact that the soul itself is *partly* the cause of so much beauty and richness; because though

the pure love of God and the holy virtues are gratuitous gifts of the Lord, nevertheless they would not continue in the soul, nor increase there, without the soul's own correspondence and co-operation with grace. For the rest, we have already seen that God dwells in this palace. He is seated in our heart as upon a throne, reposing in our affection and love, which are symbolised by the heart.

This pious consideration is well calculated to open up the way to many thoughts and affections, which are capable of fixing the attention of even the most distracted minds. In truth, how wonderful it is to see that Infinite Majesty, whom, as the Scripture says, the heavens cannot contain, become so little (if we may be permitted to use the expression), as to take up His poor abode in our nothingness! And, in reality, is not our soul a mere nothing in comparison with God? "*The whole world*," says the Wise Man, "*before God is a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth*" (Wisdom xi. 23); and the Psalmist says: "*My substance is as nothing before Thee*" (Ps. xxxviii. 6). Wherefore we shall find ourselves constrained to address our God in those words of Solomon: "*If heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house of mine*" (3 Kings viii. 27).

What sentiments of humility and of holy confusion will be excited in us, on seeing that the house of our soul is by no means all covered

with the pure gold of divine love, nor adorned with the precious pearls of the other virtues, but, on the contrary, is full of many defilements, because of our numerous defects and sins!

What burning desires will be kindled in us, to leave nothing undone in order to purify, to adorn, and to enrich this house of ours, so as to receive therein with as little unworthiness as possible so great a Sovereign!

Moreover, what a surprise it must be, to see within us that Infinite Beauty, the sight of whom causes eternal joy in heaven, and to reflect on His condescension in dwelling in this house of ours, to illumine it by His light, and to adorn it by His infinite splendour! And once we behold within us a beauty so noble and so perfect, will we ever again permit our looks to wander after the wretched things of this world, which are falsely styled *beautiful*, and are admired as such by so many to the great peril of their souls? Wherefore shall we say with David: "*Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity*" (Ps. cxviii. 37). And how great, too, must necessarily be our desire to behold one day without a veil, and face to face, that ineffable beauty, of which even a single ray would suffice to render happy through all eternity the innumerable hosts of the angels and the saints!

In like manner we might continue to meditate on the other divine attributes, as we contemplate within us that Infinite Wisdom which penetrates all things, that Infinite Power to which

nothing is impossible, and, finally, that Infinite Goodness which merits nothing short of an infinite love, and which though loved by all the angels and saints, in the highest degree of which their nature will admit, is nevertheless loved by them infinitely less than it deserves.

§ 2. The soul the garden of God.

The better to help ourselves in acquiring this facility of realising the divine presence within us, we may take up other figures also, which are no less appropriate and no less fertile in pious thoughts. Thus, our soul is not only God's house: it is also *the garden of God.* "*Hortus conclusus soror mea Sponsa:*" *my sister my spouse is a garden enclosed* (Cant. iv. 12). It is thus God is pleased to style the soul that is dear to Him, wherein He dwells by His divine presence. We may, therefore, picture to ourselves our soul as a delightful garden, enclosed by a strong fence or wall, where no one may enter except the gardener who has the charge of cultivating it—a garden abounding in crystal water, rendered fruitful by a warm atmosphere, fragrant with beautiful flowers, and rich in luscious fruits. Such in truth is our soul, wherein the Divine Spouse delights to tarry. It is like a garden protected on all sides by a strong enclosure, because of the manifold means of defence given to it by Christ, in order to ward off the spiritual enemies, who are continually prowling around, and attack it by night and day. It abounds in the crystal waters of the divine graces, which flow into it

from *the fountains of the Saviour*, as Isaias calls His adorable wounds. It is rendered fruitful by heavenly love, which imparts to it strength and vigour, and merits for it eternal life. From the virtues with which it is adorned, as from beautiful and rare flowers, there is exhaled the sweet and healthful fragrance of good example, which is therefore called by Saint Paul "*the good odour of Christ*" (2 Cor. ii. 15); and its many charitable and religious works are the sweet fruits which enrich it with immortal treasures, called by the same Apostle "*the fruit of the spirit*" (Galatians v. 22).

We shall contemplate our Beloved coming down into this garden of our soul, to refresh Himself with the fragrance of its flowers, to taste of its fruits, to pluck its lilies. Happy the soul that can then repeat with truth the words of the Spouse in the Canticle: "*I to my beloved and my beloved to me who feedeth among the lilies*" (Cant. vi. 2), "*In our gates are all the fruits: the new and the old, my beloved, I have kept for thee*" (*Ibid.* vii. 13).

But if, on the other hand, we shall find this garden ravaged by our enemies, because of the little guard which we have kept over our heart; if we shall find it dry and barren, because of our ingratitude and coldness in the divine service; if, perhaps, we shall even find it full of weeds and briars, because of our vanities and sins, how great reason will we have to humble ourselves and be confounded, and with most fervent

entreaties to beseech the All-powerful Husbandman, that in His infinite mercy He would deign to repair all the injury that had been done to His garden, and to change it into a garden of delights wherein He might for ever dwell!

This idea of a garden as a type of the human soul was a favourite one with Saint Teresa, and she thus speaks of it in the 14th chapter of her *Life*. "Often in the beginning . . . . it was a source of great pleasure to me to consider that my soul was a garden, and that the Lord used to delight to walk therein. I used to beg of Him that He would deign to increase the perfume of the little flowers of virtue that were beginning to show signs of budding forth, and that He might preserve them for His own glory. And as I wished for nothing for myself, I besought Him to pluck and gather those which pleased Him, since I well knew that this would only make them bloom all the better afterwards."

§ 3. The soul God's firmament.

Another excellent figure is that of the firmament to which, likewise, as Saint Gregory the Great observes (Hom. 38 in Ev.), our soul is compared in the Holy Scriptures. "The Lord says: Heaven is my seat; and Solomon says: The soul of the just man is the seat of wisdom. Again, Paul calls Christ the Virtue of God—the Wisdom of God: whence we must infer that, if God is Wisdom itself, and the soul of the just man is the seat of wisdom, as long as heaven is called the

seat of God, the soul of the just man ought to be regarded as a heaven."

Now there is nothing nobler or more magnificent than the firmament. The firmament in a special manner manifests the glory of its Creator: "*Cœli enarrant gloriam Dei*" (Ps. xviii. 1). The sun fills it with its glorious splendour, the moon sheds her mild beams over it, and it is studded with innumerable brilliant stars. In like manner, the human soul is the noblest and most admirable work of God's Omnipotence upon this earth. It is flooded with torrents of light of heavenly wisdom, which like a sun illumines it: for its moon we have devotion to Mary, which, like a moon among the stars, stands out sweetly among the many excellencies and rich gifts of every pious soul; and we may consider as its stars the innumerable acts of virtue which adorn and beautify it with undying splendour.

In this little heaven of our soul, which in God's sight far excels the material firmament on which we gaze, we may contemplate His Divine Majesty who has chosen it for His abode, and there we may worship Him with profound sentiments of gratitude and of love, for having communicated to this soul of ours so many favours and such great glory. But should we find our soul like a dark and stormy sky, because of our own culpable ignorances and unbridled passions, let us, with contrite and sorrowing hearts, beg His Divine Majesty to brush away

every cloud, to calm the storm, and to make this heaven of our heart clear, and pure, and brilliant, as becometh the seat of God.

§ 4. The soul the temple of God.

Again, we might picture to ourselves our soul under the figure of a temple—a comparison which is likewise borrowed from Holy Writ. "*You are the temple of the living God*," says the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians—*Vos enim estis templum Dei vivi* (2 Cor. vi. 16). Now, a temple ought to be spacious, rich, well-adorned; and prayers, hymns of thanksgiving and praise, and especially sacrifice, ought to be unceasingly offered up there. Wherefore, we must reflect that our soul, likewise, ought to be large in holy desires, and rich and well-adorned with every virtue; that it ought continually to resound with prayers, with thanksgiving, and with the praises of God; and that, above all, on the altar of our heart, ever aflame with the fire of holy love, we ought to offer up to God the acceptable sacrifice of our affections, immolating to Him our every desire, in order that it may be in perfect conformity with His divine will.

Moreover, we shall reflect that, as in the time of Solomon the Majesty of God, under the appearance of a cloud, filled the Temple of Jerusalem, so, too, it fills our soul. In the 20th chapter of her *Life*, Saint Teresa considers God under this figure of a majestic cloud, which not only fills the soul, but also rains down upon it the waters of heavenly consolation.

Finally, we must, as before, humble ourselves and weep over our shortcomings, should we find on reflection that our soul is but a poor, small, unfurnished, and filthy temple, wherein little or nothing is done for the honour of God.

§ 5. God the heart of the soul.

We may likewise avail ourselves of other types and figures, even though they should not be found in the Scriptures, to help ourselves in realising the presence of God in our souls. Thus, for example, the soul may represent to itself its Divine Lord as being its own heart. For as the life of the body proceeds from the heart, and instantly ceases should the heart fail to perform its functions, so likewise, were the presence of God to depart from man's soul, it would instantly become dead to divine grace, by a death to be infinitely more dreaded than any possible kind of temporal death.

In this manner the soul will come to understand, that whatever it possesses of strength, of beauty, of health, and of life, all comes to it from the presence of God, as from a life-giving heart. And as every one loves, guards, and shields from injury his heart more than anything else, so, in like manner, the soul will understand that it ought to love its God above everything, that it ought to value the possession of Him above everything, and that there is nothing about which it ought to be so anxious as that He should not receive the slightest offence, just as one would ward off even the least wound from his heart.

§ 6. How we may make practical use of these considerations.

We may make the preceding pious reflections from time to time, whenever the soul feels itself disposed for them, and we may continue them as long as we find in them food for our devotion. We may, moreover, nourish them by some thought or affection which may happen to be suggested to us by a passing circumstance. Thus, for example, should we happen to enter a church that is very neat, well furnished, and devotional, we might say: *O my God, would that the temple of my soul were similarly well kept for Thy honour!* In like manner, on seeing the sky very serene and beautiful, we might say: *My God, would that my soul were equally beautiful and pure in Thy sight!* Even objects of a character quite opposite to these might be utilised to produce suitable affections. Thus, on seeing an ill-kept church, a dark and stormy sky, a filthy house, a neglected garden, we might say: *Ah! Lord, never permit that my soul become such in Thy sight!*

It will be also a useful practice to revive this faith in the presence of God within our soul, when, in compliance with God's will, we have to occupy ourselves in the service of our body (as, for instance, in eating, drinking, sleeping, taking recreation, &c.), by intending to perform all such actions, not to please ourselves, but *to give pleasure to God who is within us.* Thus we read of Saint Gertrude that once, feeling very weak, she wished to refresh herself with some

grapes, and thereby to give pleasure to her Beloved who dwelt within her. Whereupon the Lord said to her, that by this act He felt compensated for the bitterness He experienced when the sponge was presented to Him on the cross; "because," He added, "I thereby suck from your heart an incredible sweetness. And the more you refresh your body with a pure intention for My honour, the more am I refreshed as I dwell within your soul." This would be a sweet and very profitable exercise of the love of God, which would render very precious in His sight many works that we now perform materially, almost like beasts, simply because we feel a natural inclination towards them, and our senses are gratified by them (Pacetti, *School of Saint Gertrude*, p. 1, chap. 3).

It must, however, be borne in mind, as has been already remarked, that if these devout reflections do not present themselves to the soul quietly and spontaneously, we *must not force ourselves* to dwell upon them. In this sea we must advance not by using the oar, but by the help of the wind; and if the breath of the Holy Spirit does not fill our sails, it will be useless to weary our arms with rowing. Saint Teresa expressly says that "we cannot well transact business with God if we rely upon violent efforts" (*Life*, chap. 15). Nevertheless since, as the Saint says, and as we shall see later on, this is not that kind of contemplation which is directly infused by God into the soul, we ought *to adopt some measures*

whereby we may cultivate these holy thoughts in our hearts, if God should be pleased to grant us the grace to do so. Should any one, however, not feel himself disposed towards them, let him, nevertheless, continue to pray, and content himself with merely remembering, from time to time, that he is in the presence of his God.

CHAPTER X.

Of the means which may be employed for the purpose of acquiring a sense of the divine presence in our souls.

§ 1. The memory must be exercised in recalling to mind God's presence.

We repeat that the soul must adopt some measures, in order to succeed in knowing how to concentrate its thoughts upon itself, and to remain united with God, who is really present within it. Let us now try to learn from Saint Teresa what these measures ought to be: "We can acquire this," she says, "in many ways, as we find laid down in certain books, viz., by disengaging ourselves from everything in order thereby to approach interiorly to God, and even by retiring into ourselves in the midst of our very occupations, were it only for a moment. To remember that *we have company within our soul* is very useful. The only thing that I require is, that we remain with Him with

whom we are speaking, without turning our backs upon Him; for to my mind we do nothing short of this, when we think of a thousand vanities while engaged in conversing with God. All the evil proceeds from our not understanding that He is most truly near us, and not at all far off; but would He not be very far off, indeed, if it were necessary for us to go all the way to heaven to seek Him? Does Thy face, then, O Lord, not deserve to be looked upon, simply because Thou art so near us? We think that men do not hear what we say to them, if we perceive that, while we are speaking with them, they are not looking at us: and will we deliberately shut our eyes in order not to see Thee looking upon us? And should we do so, how then can we know whether Thou hast heard what we say to Thee?

"What I wish to convey to you is solely and simply this: that in order to accustom ourselves easily to quiet the understanding, so that it may attend both to what it says and to whom it is speaking, it is unnecessary to withdraw these exterior senses of ours within ourselves, and there find them something to do; for it is certain that we possess heaven within us, since the Lord of heaven resides there. In a word, it is necessary to accustom ourselves to taste the sweetness of His presence, and to be convinced that, in order to speak with Him, we need not raise our voice and cry aloud, for His Majesty will let us know He is there. . . . .

"In conclusion, let whoever wishes to acquire this excellent method of recollection (for, as I have said, with God's help, it is in our power to do so), not grow weary in accustoming herself to do what I have been saying; because it is to gain the mastery over one's self by little and little, whereby we suffer no loss of liberty, but rather completely emancipate ourselves from the world, by employing our senses upon interior concerns. If we speak, let us endeavour to remember that we have within us One with whom to speak; if we listen, we must bear in mind that we are about to listen to One who is speaking very close to us. In a word, let us understand that, if we but wish it, we heed never separate ourselves from such excellent company; and let us grieve from our hearts when, for any length of time, we abandon them, and leave in solitude our Father of whom we stand so much in need If we can do this many times in the course of the day, let us do so; if not, let us do it at least sometimes; for when we shall have accustomed ourselves to it, we will derive great benefits therefrom, sooner or later. Once the Lord shall have granted this favour to us, we will not barter it for any earthly treasure; but nothing is gained without a little trouble. For the love of God, my sisters, consider as well employed whatever care you bestow on this matter; for I well know that if you practise it for a year, or even, perhaps, for six months, you will, with God's help, obtain this favour. Consider what a short time is required to accom-

plish such a desirable result as is the laying of a solid foundation, so that should God be pleased to raise you to higher things, He may find in you this excellent preparation for them—namely, to find your near Himself. May it please His Divine Majesty not to permit that we should ever withdraw ourselves from His most loving presence, Amen" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 29). In accordance with what she here teaches, the Saint says in the 4th chapter of her *Life:* "I endeavoured, as best I could, to have always present within me Jesus Christ, our Supreme Good and our Lord; and this was my manner of prayer".

We see, then, that the first means to be employed, in order to acquire an abiding sense of the presence of God, is *to exercise our memory*, by frequently recalling to mind that God is with us; nay more, that *He is within us*. To remember this truth ought not to cost us any effort, for it is, after all, an extremely simple matter, just like recalling to mind any other object. Now, what difficulty could we experience, for example, in recalling to mind, even frequently, that we have a heart within our breast? None whatever: and if the remembering of this fact were of consequence to our bodily health, by merely thinking frequently that we had a heart, we should soon come to recall the fact to mind thousands of times during the day with the greatest ease, and without any effort whatsoever. As a matter of fact we rarely think of it, because it serves no

purpose to do so, since the heart performs its vital functions without any attention on our part, and in this it acts independently of our control. But God does not act thus in the economy of His grace. He is not willing to give life to our souls, as the heart gives life to the body, unless we ourselves feel some little anxiety about the matter; and therefore it is extremely necessary for the salvation of our souls that we should constantly remember God.

To remember in this manner that God is within us will be also to see Him within us, not indeed under any form or figure, for such do not belong to God, but it will be to see Him simply by faith. And by remembering that He is there, by casting a glance upon Him with the eye of faith, by praying to Him, we shall be with Him, that is to say, we shall pay attention to Him, and will not turn our backs upon Him, as we should do were we to give way to voluntary distractions by thinking on other matters. This is as much as it is naturally possible for us to do with the aid of divine grace; because to enjoy a *special* sense of God's presence within us, is a matter which depends entirely on God's own will; and such a sense He will give us whenever He may judge fit.

This special sense of God's presence is a matter which cannot be described in words: the soul is made conscious in various ways of the presence of God, but no one can tell how this really occurs. The soul, as Saint John of the

Cross says, feels itself *refreshed*, *delighted*, *gladdened*, but in a secret, hidden manner, which it is unable to manifest to others; at best, it could but give some faint idea of it in a very gross and imperfect fashion, which could not be understood by any, save by those who themselves had experienced it.

§ 2. One ought not to be discouraged should he find the foregoing doctrine obscure.

Should a Christian who desires to acquire the gift of interior recollection find the foregoing doctrine obscure, he must not on this account be discouraged. It will be quite enough for him in that case to endeavour to do what Saint Teresa wishes when she says: "The only thing that I require is, that we remain with Him with whom we are speaking, without turning our backs upon Him," which is equivalent to saying that we should remember that we are in God's presence, and *should not give way to voluntary distractions*. The Lord, seeing a soul endeavouring to attain this degree of attention (always, however, quietly, and without any violent efforts), will bestow upon it the desired spirit of recollection, even though the person should not understand what it is, and may consider all that is said about it to be involved in great obscurity.

We must not suppose, however, that want of understanding in this matter proceeds from stupidity or dulness of intellect. It proceeds rather from want of experience—that is, from not having yet tasted those special and delicious favours which God is accustomed to grant to

many souls. In just the same way, for example, a person of even the greatest intellect could never realise what it is that is conveyed by the idea of sweetness, if he had never tasted anything sweet, while a very stupid person, who had had practical experience in the matter, would immediately become conscious of the presence of sweetness on tasting some sweet food. This is the teaching of Saint Teresa in several parts of her works, and among others in the 11th chapter of her *Life*, where she says: "May the Lord open the eyes of my readers by giving them the gift of experience; for however slight that experience may be, they will then understand my meaning". And, speaking of herself, she adds: "For many years I had read much on these subjects, but understood nothing of them".

Now this is worthy of being very carefully noted, precisely because all persons *will not* understand everything that the Saint has written of prayer, and, not understanding it, they will perhaps imagine that they have not sufficient capacity to learn from her the method of prayer. The result of such an impression might be, that they would consider it useless to enter on the path marked out for them by the Saint, fearing lest they should not be able to continue in it. Now this would be a capital and most hurtful mistake. No matter how little one may understand of these questions, let him not be disheartened or frightened on this account. Let him not give himself the least trouble about

what he does not understand: let him merely carry out in practice whatever little he may understand, and, so long as he does this, the Lord will *gradually* make him taste something of that which was previously unintelligible to him. Thenceforward he will by degrees come to understand what at first surpassed his comprehension, and what before was most obscure will then become very clear to him. But all this while we must cultivate humility and patience, and wait for the gifts of God, until such time as it shall please Him to communicate them to us.

And here I wish to make another remark, which, likewise, is of the greatest importance, namely, that as it is not necessary to have talent in order to understand certain matters relating to prayer—that is to say, various favours which God bestows on the soul—so the absence of talent is no obstacle to *receiving* these favours. If one is sufficiently instructed in the Christian doctrine in proportion to his capacity, and if he have a good disposition and a desire to approach God and to hold converse with Him in prayer, he is perfectly capable of receiving the highest spiritual favours mentioned by Saint Teresa (including even those which are least understood by the very learned who have not experienced them), no matter though in every other respect he should be very ignorant, rude, uneducated, and even densely stupid. Indeed since it frequently happens that these ignorant and stupid persons are more humble and simple than the learned,

so, oftentimes, they are also better disposed to receive in prayer those special favours of God.

Great talent is a gift of God, but it is a gift which is by no means necessary in order to pray well. This gift is required in order to converse well with men; but it is not necessary in order to speak well with God. To speak well with God, one needs good desires, and nothing more. We must mark well the great difference there is between speaking with men and speaking with God. Men do not suggest our thoughts to us, nor do they put the words into our mouth: consequently, we need to reflect well and to speak well in order to carry on a conversation properly with them. But, on the other hand, when we are engaged in prayer, God does both these things for us. In the interior of our heart, where He is present as on His throne, He awakens holy feelings, and He puts into our mouth holy expressions which He wishes us to employ in addressing Him; and these feelings and expressions are such, that the most sublime genius and all the unassisted wisdom of men could never find anything to equal them. Wherefore, if you are anxious to learn how to pray, be assured that you lack no qualification whatever for discharging this exercise properly, if the only things in which you are deficient are talent and human learning. The good desire which animates you is more than sufficient to enable you to reach the goal towards which you are striving, provided, of

course, that God assists you with His grace, as He certainly will not fail to do.

But to return to the extract quoted above from Saint Teresa—we ought to mark well how solicitous she would have us be to recall to mind frequently that we have God present within us, thereby casting a glance upon Him with the eye of faith. This, of course, applies principally and in a special manner to the time of prayer; but that we may the better accustom ourselves to attend to this interior presence of our God, the Saint would wish that even in the course of the day—even when engaged in *speaking* with, or *listening* to the conversation of, worldly persons—we should be mindful of Him who is within our hearts, speaking with us and listening to us, and that we should do this *many times in the day if possible, but if not, that we should do it at least occasionally.* (Observe here the discretion of Saint Teresa, so entirely in accord with the spirit of the Lord.) Furthermore, she would have us grieve, should we unfortunately be conscious to ourselves of *having left alone for a considerable time* that Divine Guest who condescends to dwell in our soul. The meaning of all of which is, that when, through over-anxiety about worldly affairs, we allow a considerable time to elapse without calling God to mind, we ought to ask pardon of Him for our want of courtesy and good manners, just as we should do if, on being favoured with a visit from some distinguished personage, we were to leave him

alone in our house, and go out to converse with some persons of low condition.

If we adopt the method suggested by the Saint, she assures us that, sooner or later, we shall succeed in attaining the sense of the divine presence, which is a gift of such value that, once acquired, *we would not exchange it for any treasure whatsoever;* and she holds out a hope to us that *in a year or six months* we may succeed in acquiring it, and in finding ourselves disposed to receive the most stupendous favours from God's Majesty.

§ 3. Purity of conscience.

There is another point on which Saint Teresa lays great stress in the 28th chapter of her *Way of Perfection*, namely, that since we must consider the soul as th house or palace of God, we ought to keep it clean, and free from everything that might be displeasing to Him, so that it may be filled with the divine presence. Here are her words: "The point lies in our surrendering to Him, with a full and perfect resolution, this palace of our soul to be entirely His own, and that we remove everything out of it, so that He may furnish it in whatever way He pleases, as one might do in his own house. This is the condition which He lays down; and since it is a reasonable one, let us not refuse it to Him, because, as He is unwilling to force our will in any matter, He takes only what we freely give Him. But He will not give Himself entirely to us, until we give ourselves up without reserve

to Him (this is certain, and because it is of great importance I often remind you of it); nor does He ever work in our souls with such efficacy as when it is unreservedly His own; nor, indeed, can I understand how He could act there, since He is altogether a lover of order. Now if we crowd this palace with rabble and with trumpery toys, how can it contain our Lord with His entire court?"

Wherefore we ought to be extremely careful to keep our soul very pure and free from all sensual and worldly affections and attachments, which would be like the presence of rabble and useless toys in a palace, and would prove an obstacle to our enjoying the fulness therein of the divine presence.

Moreover, we know that "*Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God*" (Matth. v. 8); and not only shall they see Him hereafter in unveiled glory in heaven, but, by the powerful light of faith, they shall see Him even amidst the darkness of this world. Nay, more, they shall be prepared also, as far as is permissible in this land of exile, to see Him by wonderful manifestations within their own souls, where He is so intimately present. Now, this cleanness and purity of heart cannot be acquired except through the medium of divine love; and, touching this matter, Saint John of the Cross writes as follows: "As the dark and material fires in the next life, so the loving, dark, and spiritual fires here purify and cleanse the predestined. . . .

David prayed for this love when he said, '*Create a clean heart in me, O God*,' &c. (Ps. l. 12), for cleanness of heart is nothing else but the love and grace of God. Therefore, our Divine Saviour said, '*Blessed are the clean of heart*,' which is as though He had said, blessed are those who love, for blessedness can come of nothing else than love" (*The Obscure Night of the Soul*, book II., chap. 12). Wherefore, it is necessary that we accustom ourselves to the continual practice of acts of pure and lively love of God, in order to acquire cleanness of heart, and thereby, as far as is possible here below, that loving knowledge of God of which the same Saint John of the Cross writes so beautifully in several portions of his works. Another means suggested by Saint Teresa, in order to acquire a sense of the divine presence, is thus set forth by her in the following passage: "Whoever walks in this way almost always keeps his eyes shut when praying; and it is for many reasons an admirable custom, because it is a *forcing* ourselves not to look at things here below. This shutting of the eyes takes place only in the beginning of prayer, for afterwards there is no need of it, since, in the progress of the prayer, more force is required to open them" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 28).

§ 4. We should ordinarily pray with our eyes shut.

This advice of the Saint might at first sight appear somewhat minute and trivial, since one can pray very well with the eyes open,

and, in fact, is compelled to do so when he has to read prayers which he does not know by rote. Nevertheless, if we reflect that the soul, wishing to look upon God with the eye of faith, and to hold converse with its Beloved really present within it, has need of concentrating all its powers upon itself, and of removing every distraction which may come through the medium of the senses, we will understand that, whenever it may be possible—that is, whenever we have not to read our prayers—it will be very useful to shut our eyes, in order that the interior sight of the soul may not be disturbed by the exercise of our corporal sight, nor the senses of the soul obstructed by the action of our bodily senses.

By following the counsels contained in this chapter, we will dispose ourselves for the Prayer of Recollection, which is suited to all classes of persons, and is precisely the method of prayer which Saint Teresa would wish to teach us.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the advantages resulting from this method of prayer.

§ 1. It prevents distractions.

"Do you think," says Saint Teresa (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 28), "that it is of slight importance to a distracted soul to understand this truth—that God is within us

—and to know that in order to speak with her Eternal Father, and to refresh herself in His company, she need not go to heaven nor speak aloud, since, however low she may speak, He is so near that He will hear us. Nor does she require wings to fly and seek Him, but she can compose herself in solitude, and contemplate Him within herself, and not leave the side of so good a guest, but speak to Him with great humility as to a Father, pray to Him as to a Father, tell Him of her troubles, and beg a remedy for them, recognising herself as unworthy to be His daughter."

This practice of the Prayer of Recollection, then, is of no slight advantage to a distracted soul. And, in fact, to contemplate with the eye of faith our God present within us—that is to say, to see within us a majesty exceeding all greatness, a beauty surpassing all loveliness and glory, a goodness that has no limits, the true essence of heaven—will prove a very efficacious means to prevent ourselves from being distracted by the wretched exterior things of this world.

§ 2. Familiarity with God is more easily acquired.

"Treat with Him," continues Saint Teresa, "as with a Father, as with a Brother, as with a Lord, as with a Spouse, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, for He will teach you what you have to do to please Him. . . . Remember that it concerns you very much to understand this truth —that God dwells within you, and that there we should dwell with Him. This method of prayer,

though it be vocal, concentrates our thoughts much more quickly, and is a prayer that brings with it many benefits. It is called the Prayer of *Recollection*, because, while engaged in it, the soul *recollects all its powers*, and *retires within itself with its God*, and there its Divine Master comes to instruct it, by a method much more expeditious than any other, and to bestow upon it the *Prayer of Quiet*."

Therefore by adopting this method of prayer taught by Saint Teresa, we shall learn to treat familiarly with God, and to confer with Him on all our affairs, as one does with a near relative, or with a member of his own family. The very fact of knowing that we have not to seek for our Father, our Brother, our Lord, and our Spouse, at a distance from us; that we need not, so to speak, *take wings* to fly to Heaven, nor *raise our voice* that He may hear us in that blessed abode; but that, instead, we may at any moment we please embrace Him and speak, as it were, into His very ear, will cause us to enter into relations of humble confidence with Him, in order to lay before Him our every desire and want, in the same manner as a daughter might lay them before her father, a brother before a brother, or a wife before her husband. After our faith in God's loving presence has been well revived by this practice, then will follow that result promised by Saint Teresa in the 21st chapter, namely, that even though we should wish to do so, we shall not be able (if we may use the expression) *to get*

rid of Him, and in all places we shall find Him beside us. And with reason: for surely God will neither wish to depart from a soul that embraces Him with a desire so loving, nor will the soul, on the other hand, be able to tear itself from Him, after having embraced Him so closely and so sweetly.

§ 3. We make more progress in less time.

Saint Teresa continues thus: "Let those who can thus shut themselves up in this little heaven of our soul, wherein He dwells who created it . . . and who will accustom themselves not to look or tarry where their external senses distract them, be assured that they walk in an excellent path, and that they shall not fail to succeed in drinking water from the Fountain, thereby accomplishing a great distance in a little time. It resembles the case of one who, by making a voyage by sea, reaches his journey's end in a few days, if he have a favourable wind, while those who go by land require more time. Those who have in some degree acquired the gift of interior recollection, are already, as the saying is, well out to sea; and although they have not entirely lost sight of land, nevertheless, by recollecting their thoughts and senses, they do all they can to get quite clear of it.

"Then, again, when the recollection is real, we have a clear perception of it, because it produces a certain effect (which I am unable to explain, but which the person who experiences it will understand), so that the soul seems to rise

up from her play a winner, for she now, indeed, perceives that the things of the world are no better than play. She seizes the opportunity, and, like one who retires into a strong fortress the better to protect himself against the assaults of his enemies, she withdraws the senses from those exterior objects and detests them, so that the eyes unconsciously close in order that they may not see them, and that the eyes of the soul may open all the wider. . . . It would seem as though the soul knew how to fortify and strengthen herself at the expense of the body, and that she leaves it alone and enfeebled, while she stores up a supply of provisions against it here in her fortress."

Wherefore, by means of this Prayer of Recollection, we shall make greater progress in less time, and we shall learn more easily to fill up with God the powers of our soul—the intellect, the memory, and the will. By means of this kind of prayer we shall, as it were, emancipate ourselves from our bodily senses which are nourished by worldly vanities, and we shall cultivate the powers of the soul, which find their sustenance in the true and real goods of God.

And here we must remark that these powers are of such immense capacity that, as Saint John of the Cross says (*Living Flame*, stanza 3, § 1), *nothing less than the Infinite can fill them.* Our understanding cannot be satisfied, unless it be filled with the light of God: our memory refuses to be satisfied, except it be filled with God's

presence: our will is not contented, unless when it is satiated with His love. Now, in the Prayer of Recollection the intellect is more easily flooded with the light of God, and rests satisfied with the knowledge of so great a good. The memory, likewise, is filled with the presence of God, and is highly gratified with such blessed company: the will is filled with God's love, and feasts itself upon Him, and is satiated in possessing Him.

It must, likewise, be known that, in addition to our bodily senses, we are endowed also with interior senses of the soul, of which Saint Bonaventure speaks so clearly (in *Itin aetern*, 6, dist. 2), that it is well to reproduce his words: "Man," he says, "has two distinct kinds of senses, the one exterior, the other interior. . . . The exterior senses have for their objects material and earthly things, with which they rest satisfied; but the interior senses have for their object God, by contemplating whom they are ennobled. And as in the body there are five senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—by means of which we perceive the presence of physical substances, so in like manner the soul is endowed with sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, by means of which it perceives spiritual things through sensations of the Spirit." He then goes on, as follows, to prove this by the authority of Holy Writ: "In Deuteronomy (xxxii. 39) God says: '*See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides me*'—here we have mention of spiritual sight. In the Apocalypse we read (ii. 7): '*He*

that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith'—here we have spiritual hearing. Holy David says (Ps. xxxiii. 9): '*Taste and see that the Lord is sweet*'—here there is mention of spiritual taste. The Apostle says (2 Cor. ii. 15) that '*we are the good odour of Christ*'—here is spiritual smell; and our Lord said that He was touched more by the faith than by the hands of the woman who came to be cured by Him from the flow of blood—here we have spiritual touch. . . . Wherefore (he concludes), it is evident that as we acquire a practical knowledge of physical substances by means of our bodily senses, so by means of the senses of our soul we acquire experience in spiritual matters."

Now, in the Prayer of Recollection these senses of the soul are occupied about its beloved Lord in a wondrous manner, and to the soul's intense satisfaction, so that in Him it enjoys a light, a voice, a fragrance, a food, and a contact of unspeakable happiness.

§ 4. How easy it is to acquire the gift of recollection.

If we practise prayer after the manner taught by Saint Teresa, we shall easily acquire the gift of being interiorly recollected with God, and we will acquire it, as the Saint remarks, "although at first it should not be understood, as not being then very great (for in this recollection there are degrees, it being sometimes greater, sometimes less); nevertheless, if it grow into a custom, although in the beginning it may cause trouble, . . . if, I repeat, it be practised for some days,

and if we do this violence to ourselves, the benefit we shall derive therefrom will be evident. We shall perceive, when we begin to pray, that the bees are repairing to their hive and are entering into it to make honey, and this without any anxiety or trouble on our part; because the Lord wishes that, in reward of the trouble which the will took in the beginning, it should now merit such a command and mastery over the senses, that whenever the soul wishes to be recollected, the senses require nothing more than the merest intimation of this desire, in order to obey and to retire within her. And although they should afterwards go out again, it is nevertheless a great matter that they have already learned to submit; because then they go forth as slaves and subjects, and they no longer work the mischief which they could have effected formerly: and when the will again recalls them they return with greater readiness, until, after they have often re-entered in this manner, the Lord is pleased that they shall remain entirely absorbed in perfect contemplation" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 28).

We ought to reflect well upon the opening words of the foregoing passage—*Although at first this recollection should not be understood*, &c. By these words the Saint would have us know, that when the soul first begins to enjoy the Prayer of Recollection, it is in such a slight degree that she fails to perceive she has it at all, and does not recognise it; but, later on,

when the recollection increases, it becomes sensible, and all the more sensible in proportion as it becomes greater. Thus when the seedling of a tree first begins to sprout forth in a field, it is surrounded by the grass, and cannot be distinguished from it; but after it has grown somewhat and put forth its tender branches, then indeed we perceive that it is a tree, which is destined not to remain long hidden among the grass, but to tower high above the field. In like manner, it happens that souls which give themselves up to the holy exercise of prayer, are favoured by God with the grace of interior recollection even before they perceive the fact, and they become conscious of it only when, after it has sensibly grown, they feel within themselves an extraordinary concentration of all their faculties upon their Lord.

The reader should note those other very consoling words of the Saint, where she says that though one should in the beginning experience some difficulty in recollecting himself and concentrating his senses upon God, yet in a short time, and with a little practice, this power of recollection and concentration becomes so easy, in recompense *of the trouble already taken*, that it is accomplished at the mere beck of the soul; so that at its pleasure the soul can interiorly recollect itself with its God, and sees its thoughts and affections, in perfect submission, occupying themselves with their Lord—nay, entering into Him, as the bees enter into the hive where they

store up their honey. Wherefore the Saint, who well knew the truth of what she was saying, and the solid foundation on which her promises rested, does not hesitate to assert that by this path the soul will easily pass on from the Prayer of Quiet to supernatural contemplation, which is the most expeditious means to arrive at perfection, and to attain that union with God which is, in a manner, a transformation of the soul into the knowledge and love of God.

§ 5. The fire of divine love is thus easily kindled in the soul.

Saint Teresa continues *(Ibid.)*: "Let what I have just said be well considered; for even though it may appear obscure, yet whoever will practise it shall understand it. These then (*i.e.*, those who practise the Prayer of Recollection) go by sea, and so they advance more quickly: they are more secure from the many temptations and dangerous occasions which beset souls; and the fire of divine love takes hold of them more quickly, because since they are so near it, once it is fanned by the least breath of the understanding, all will be aflame, if only the smallest spark should touch them. And as there is no obstacle from without, the soul remains alone with its God, and so is entirely prepared to be set on fire."

Let it be remembered, then, once more, that Saint Teresa cautions us not to pretend to a clear understanding of these matters, until, by adopting the proper means, we shall have acquired same *practical experience* of them. These means, as we have already seen, are, with God's grace,

within our power; but the result rests solely with God, who will give it how and when it shall please Him, and in such measure as He may judge best.

Observe how beautiful is the conclusion of the passage cited above, in which the Saint, as it were, paints for us a soul reposing beside its God in the Prayer of Recollection! God is charity, and therefore the fire of divine love: the soul absorbed in the Prayer of Recollection approaches Him as closely as possible, in order to remain there beside Him. Whereupon, understanding that it has close beside it a Good so Infinite, the soul cannot avoid sending a living sigh, like a breath, into that great fire that is so near, and then, in the natural order, that fire must emit at least a tiny spark, which will touch the soul, will take hold of it, and will set it all aflame with the fire of love.

§ 6. Special advantage which ignorant people may derive from this kind of prayer.

Saint Teresa says that *this method of prayer, although it be vocal, carries with it many advantages.* We have already noticed such of these advantages as are common to all; we must now touch upon the special advantage to be derived therefrom by ignorant people, and those not instructed in the meaning of the Holy Scriptures, when they recite Latin prayers, or scriptural psalms and canticles.

In the sixth chapter, we have remarked how Saint Teresa requires that *every one* should understand the ordinary prayers, such as the

"Our Father," the "Hail Mary," and the "I believe in God," in order that when they pray they may know what they are saying, and that thus the mind and heart may accompany the tongue, and their prayer be not merely vocal. But how, it may be asked, can the soul employ itself usefully, when it recites prayers the meaning of which it does not understand? Well, it can employ itself most usefully in the following manner. It must endeavour to contemplate with the eye of faith its Lord reposing within it, and to hold converse with Him, as set forth in chapters 8, 9, and 10; and thus it will easily be able to occupy itself in holy thoughts, in pious affections, and in virtuous acts, while engaged in reciting these vocal prayers the meaning of which it does not understand through want of instruction.

Let us suppose, for example, that one is reciting the Psalms of David, the meaning of which he does not understand. Now, while his tongue is repeating the words, he can revive his faith in the presence of God within his soul, he can rejoice in such sweet and distinguished company, and say: *O my God, Thou art with me, and I am with Thee.* He can embrace his Lord lovingly, and say: *Let us remain for ever united.* He can make Him an offering of his entire being, and say: *Do with me, and in me, whatsoever You may please.* He can next reflect upon his sins, and say: *O my God, how filthy is this soul of mine, which Thou hast chosen to be Thy abode!*

Purify it, I beseech Thee, since Thou alone canst do so, &c. In the same way a thousand other pious thoughts and affections can be excited in the soul during this Prayer of Recollection; and in this manner, even though one should not understand the words of the vocal prayer which he is reciting, the mind, nevertheless, remains united to God, and the vocal prayer perfectly combines with itself mental prayer.

However, it must always be borne in mind that *patience* and *time* will be required, before we can succeed in attaining this desired result; and therefore it is advisable to read over again the fifth section of the 7th chapter, and the sixth section of the 9th, so that one may not be tempted to make violent efforts which might prove useless, or even injurious.

§ 7. Whether this method of prayer is suitable only to those who cannot make formal meditation.

Having seen the many singular advantages which flow from this Prayer of Recollection, and having likewise seen that Saint Teresa wishes to dispose for it those persons who are unable to meditate (by which we must, of course, understand *methodical* meditation, as we have seen in chapters 3 and 4), some one may, perhaps, be induced to think that this Prayer of Recollection is suited to such souls *exclusively*, and that those who have an aptitude for regular meditation ought to have nothing to do with it. Such, however, is not the teaching of Saint Teresa, as we may gather from the 13th chapter of her *Life*, written by

herself, where she says: "Returning to those who reason in prayer, that is, who can make meditation, I say that they ought not to spend all their time in this; because (though it is very meritorious), being a prayer which brings with it much enjoyment, they think that no festival or other day should pass without finding them engaged in it, and they are quick to conclude that whatever time is not employed in meditation is, in fact, time lost. Now I regard a loss of this kind rather in the light of a gain. Instead o persevering in continually exercising the under standing, let them place themselves in the presence of God, and, without wearying the mind, let them continue to speak and console themselves with Him, not fatiguing themselves in reasoning and inventing fine discourses, but simply representing to Him their wants, and the reasons why He should pity and bear with us. Our prayer should be varied thus from time to time, in order that the soul may not be disgusted through being forced always to partake of the same food."

Saint Teresa concludes the same chapter as follows: "Returning, then, to what I was saying about contemplating our Lord bound to the Pillar, it is a good thing to apply the powers of the intellect to this subject for a while, reflecting on the tortures which He suffered in this stage of His Passion, and for whom He suffered them, and who He was that suffered, and the love with which He endured it all. However, take care

not to weary the soul by pursuing this method too far, but remain there with Christ without exerting the intellect. If you are able to do so, occupy it in reflecting that He is there looking at you: bear Him company, pray to Him, humble yourself before Him, offer Him consolation, and call to mind that He did not deserve such treatment. When you can do this, even though it be in the beginning of prayer, you will find it a great help."

We see, then, that the Saint, addressing those persons who have the ability to occupy themselves with formal, methodical meditations, and find much enjoyment therein, nevertheless advises them not to devote themselves *continually* to this kind of prayer, even though it be very pleasing and meritorious; but, instead, to allow the intellect to repose sometimes, and to give themselves up to the Prayer of Recollection, placing themselves in the presence of Christ, to look upon Him with the eye of faith, to converse with Him lovingly and familiarly, and to lay before Him their necessities and the claim they have upon Him to relieve them, since, through His unspeakable love, He was pleased to take upon Himself the entire burthen of man's salvation.

Wherefore, according to the counsel of Saint Teresa, even those persons who enjoy in large measure the gift of profound meditation, ought from time to time to recollect themselves interiorly with God, to repose in His presence, and

endeavour to enjoy there the manifold fruits of this intimate and loving prayer,—"*I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me*"—*Audiam quid loquatur in me Dominus Deus* (Ps lxxxiv. 9).

PART II.

On the Seven Petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

CHAPTER I.

On the First Petition: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.

Having explained in the first part of this Treatise the admirable teaching of Saint Teresa regarding prayer in general, as set forth in her *Way of Perfection*, we must now place before our readers what she has said concerning each of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, as we find it in her *meditations* on this subject for the different days of the week, and also in the above-mentioned work, the *Way of Perfection*. Here devout souls will find matter for consideration no less acceptable than what was contained in the first part, and calculated to supply them even more abundantly with spiritual nourishment.

Let us hear what the Saint says on the very opening words of this divine prayer: "Consider," she says, "the very first words which that divine mouth utters, for you will im-

mediately understand from them the love He bears you" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 26). It is thus she begins her exposition of the Lord's Prayer, and she immediately becomes lost in loving amazement, as she reflects on the full significance of all that is conveyed by our Lord in that first invocation—*Our Father, who art in heaven.* "O my Lord!" she says, "how justly do You seem to be the Father of such a Son, and how fully does your Son manifest that He is the Son of such a Father! May You be for ever blessed! Could you not, my God, have reserved this so great a favour to the end of the prayer? But no: immediately from the very beginning Thou fillest our hands, and dost bestow so high a favour upon us, that it would be exceedingly well if our intellect also were filled with it, to such a degree as entirely to occupy our will, so that it should be unable to say one word to Thee. Oh, how well, my daughters, would perfect contemplation come in here! oh, with how much reason ought the soul here to enter into herself, the better to be able to rise above herself, so that this holy Son might enable her to understand what a glorious place that is where He says His Father dwells—in heaven" (chap. 27).

§ 1. Astonishment of Saint Teresa at the first words of the Lord's Prayer.

Here we must reflect, first of all, that Saint Teresa, as she afterwards expressly says, considers that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, *joins with us* in reciting the Lord's Prayer, or rather

takes us into partnership with Himself, in order that, in union with Him, we may ask for those graces of which we stand in need; so that He thus becomes not only our master, but our companion in prayer. Wherefore, she wishes that we should pronounce the words, "Our Father," in union with Jesus Christ; and, on considering these words uttered by us conjointly with our dear Lord, the Saint is, as it were, bewildered when she reflects on the greatness of that love by which He condescends to associate with us, and wishes that we should invoke the Eternal Father by the self-same name by which He Himself addresses Him.

§ 2. Excellence and reality of the grace of being children of God.

And, in truth, who could ever imagine how infinitely precious is the favour conferred upon us, of being able in union with Jesus Christ to invoke His Eternal Father as our Father also? No one could dream of such a thing, unless, perhaps, in the hypothesis that this favour were a purely nominal compliment, devoid of all reality, just as if the son of a king were to give leave to his servants to assume the name of their sovereign—his father. Even that, no doubt, would be an act of extreme condescension, a favour so great, indeed, that no prince on earth would grant it; but still, if it were granted, it would be after all a mere empty title, and the servants would continue servants as before.

But it would be a great mistake to suppose that this favour granted us to by Jesus Christ

when He taught us the "*Our Father*," consists in nothing more than mere empty words. "*The Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called, and should be the sons of God*," says Saint John (1 John iii. 1). "*The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God*," says Saint Paul (Romans viii. 16). Wherefore when Jesus Christ confers upon us the favour of being able to invoke His Divine Father in union with Himself, by the very same name which He Himself employs, He likewise confers upon us the favour of being truly children of God, and consequently His own brothers, and co-heirs with Him of the kingdom of heaven.

This grace of being children of God is in truth incomprehensible, and is a matter rather to be wondered at in silent contemplation, than spoken of by any human tongue. By this filiation our souls are made partakers of the divine nature, they reflect the divine beauty, and possess upon this earth the same holiness which the angels and saints have in heaven. But who can understand all that is implied in this? It is only in heaven that we shall know what it all means: no intelligence upon this earth can fathom it. Nevertheless, since it is most important that we should have some knowledge, however imperfect, of a blessing so precious that it is called in Holy Writ an "Infinite treasure" (Wisdom vii. 14), we must pause a little while to reflect upon it.

There are three kinds of divine filiation. The first is called *natural*, and belongs exclusively to the Eternal Word, because of the divine generation by which He is born of the Father, and is consubstantial God with Him. The second kind of filiation is *by adoption*, whereby our soul, through sanctifying grace, is adopted to be the child of God, to participate in His friendship, and to share His nature The third kind of filiation is *common* to all creatures, inasmuch as their existence and preservation come from God, who is therefore the universal Father of all things. It does not at present enter into our plan, to speak either of the first or of the third kind of filiation. Our remarks shall, therefore, be confined to filiation of the second kind.

§ 3. Three kinds of divine filiation.

Filiation of the second kind, or by adoption, is the prerogative of every soul that is free from mortal sin, that is to say, of every soul that possesses the great treasure of the love of God. All such souls are very dear children of God. He dwells in them and takes pleasure in them; and so happy is their condition, that should they pass in it out of this life, heaven is assured to them. Just as it is impossible that the devils could drag down into hell any one of the holy souls now actually reigning with God, so it is impossible that they should drag there any of those other souls that are still in this world, so long as they preserve the grace of divine filiation. The great difference between both classes of souls is this—

that the souls which are already in heaven cannot possibly lose the grace of divine filiation, while those upon earth are in danger of losing it as long as they remain in this world. But supposing that a soul on earth does preserve this grace by avoiding mortal sin, in that case the soul is holy with the very same holiness which the blessed possess in heaven, and so long as it continues in that state, it can never by any possibility be lost.

§ 4. Qualities of divine filiation.

The venerable Father Paul Segneri, in his *Christian Instructed* (Part II., Discourse viii.), says (I give almost his own words) that a soul in this state has three qualities—three graces, as it were—which, so to speak, constitute the grace of divine filiation. The first is a surpassing beauty, which comes to it from participation in the divine nature, in such manner that, as Saint Thomas of Aquin says, what is in God substantially by reason of His essence, exists in the soul accidentally, by being made a sharer in the divine goodness—"*Id quod est substantialiter in Deo, fit accidentaliter in anima participante divinam bonitatem*" (Summa, 1, 2, q. 110, a. 2, ad 2). For this reason, in order to understand the beauty of a soul in the state of grace, it would be necessary to have a lively perception of the beauty of God's own face, of which it is a copy. Wherefore, we need not wonder if God Himself appears enamoured of such beauty, as He does when He exclaims in the Canticle: "*How beautiful art*

thou, my love (by means of grace); *how beautiful art thou*" (Cant. iv. 1).

Now, this great beauty is not a mere barren beauty, devoid of all usefulness, as the beautiful things of this world too frequently are: on the contrary, it carries with it immense riches, so that this divine filiation is a priceless treasure. To be convinced of this, we need no further assurance than the authority of Saint Thomas, who says that grace in our souls is nothing else than a germ, a beginning of eternal glory: "*Gratia nihil est aliud quam quædam incohatio gloriæ in nobis*" (2, 2, q. 24, a. 3, ad 2). Wherefore, between the grace that makes us, while still in this world, children of God, and the glory which will make us happy hereafter in heaven, there is the same difference that exists between the blossom and the fruit; so that He who possesses grace, possesses, as it were, the blossom which will afterwards fructify and produce heaven. Consequently, the light of glory by which the soul sees God clearly in heaven is nothing else than this same grace united to its total complement, as Saint Thomas likewise teaches (1, 2, q. 3, a. 3). If this be not for a Christian supreme riches, who shall say what is?

The third quality conferred, through the medium of grace, by divine filiation, is a supreme dignity; and to be convinced of this, we need only consider what the Apostle Saint John says in his first Epistle (chap. iii. v. 9). There he calls it *a seed of God.* "*Whosoever is*

born of God, committeth not sin, for His seed abideth in him." Wherefore, this filiation imparts, as it were, a heavenly nature to the soul, and, lifting it above the natural order, elevates it to the divine order. For this reason our Lord, after His Last Supper, speaking of His disciples, said to His Divine Father: "The glory which Thou hast given me, I have given to them"—*claritatem quam dedisti mihi dedi eis*—as though He had said: I have given to My faithful children that splendour of dignity which the Father has given to Me. Just as the fire might say to the iron which it has made red-hot: I have given to you all my light, all my heat, all the dignity that belongs to Me, by sharing with you, if not my nature, which is impossible, since you are iron, at least an extremely close resemblance to myself, because you resemble nothing so much as you resemble fire.

In like manner when God communicates grace to our souls, He communicates to us His own divine nature, to such a degree, that though the soul still continues to be a creature, nevertheless it is in a sense transformed into its Creator, becoming even more like to Him than the red-hot iron is like the fire. (Thus far Fr. Segneri.)

It is because of this exceeding great beauty, riches, and dignity that the Holy Scripture does nor hesitate to call the children of God by the name of God: "*Ego dixi: Dii estis, et filii excelsi omnes*" (Ps. viii. 6). Much more might be added to show the excellence of this divine filiation

which is granted to us through the means of sanctifying grace; but the little that has been already said, will assist us to understand all the better the high esteem in which we ought to hold so noble a prerogative, and to strive to guard it at all hazards, until we secure for ourselves the eternal possession of it in heaven.

CHAPTER II.

The First Petition continued.

§ 1. Of the perfection with which we must desire to correspond with the grace of divine filiation.

AMAZED at the immensity of the grace of divine filiation, Saint Teresa continues as follows: "Let us quit this earth, my daughters, since it is not right to undervalue so great a favour to such a degree, as to remain here on earth after having understood its greatness". And, in truth, if we but duly appreciate a rank and dignity so divine as is that of being called, and of being in reality, children of God, we ought to lift our thoughts so much above this world as, in the words of the Apostle (Philip. iii. 20), to fix *our conversation in heaven* where our Father reigns. What can we find on this earth which can any longer be worthy of us? To those who enjoy the sublime dignity of children of God, the things of this world are wretched and contemptible. For just

as "*that which is high to men is an abomination before God*" (Luke xvi. 15), so that which worldlings hold in the highest esteem, merits only the greatest contempt in the sight of the children of God. Wherefore it ought to be our constant aim, to put aside from us every inordinate attachment which we may entertain for the things of the world and for ourselves, as though we no longer belonged to the world, but were in fact already citizens of heaven.

On the other hand, this very detachment from the world and from ourselves is the perfection of the spiritual life, and constitutes the best security of the children of God. A heart that is really free from every earthly attachment, a heart that is holy, belongs so entirely to God, that no one *shall ever again pluck it out of His hand* (John x. 28). And since the Holy Scriptures supply us with a model of such detachment, let us reflect a little on his conduct. This model is the archangel Raphael, the guide and the guardian of the young Tobias, who for a considerable period remained among men, and conversed with them as though he were one of themselves. He ate, drank, and took repose; but he sought no gratification in these things. He looked upon the world's beauty and riches; but he neither took any pleasure in them, nor did he desire them. He travelled through various countries, lodged in many houses, and transacted several matters of business; but, all the while, nothing ever distracted him from the divine contemplation

in which he was uninterruptedly immersed He gave counsel, administered consolation, and performed works of mercy; but in doing so he never sought his own interests, being intent solely on executing the divine commands for which he was sent upon earth. And when at length the proper time arrived for putting off the visible form which he had assumed in order to live among men as one of them, he laid it aside without the least shadow of displeasure or regret. In a word, he lived upon this earth, but he felt not the least attachment to it: his real life was all the while passed there where his love was centred—in heaven.

Well, then, though we are not angels, and never can be, yet we ought to endeavour, as far as our human weakness will permit, not to seek for any mere pleasure in satisfying the necessities of our natural life, nor ought we to find delight in harbouring desires of any earthly good. In discharging the various duties of our state, we ought to endeavour to keep our minds fixed upon God, never leaving Him alone, but always entertaining to the best of our power that divine guest, who, as we have already seen (Part I., chap. 9), has condescended to make our soul a little heaven, a temple, a garden in which to dwell and to enjoy Himself. Wherefore we should strive that every act of ours, performed in the discharge of our duties, should be done solely to give pleasure to our Supreme Lord and Father, without seeking therefrom any purely

personal recompense; so that we shall neither move, nor perform any other action, except under the influence of divine love, until the time arrives when our spirit, freed not merely in desire but in reality from every earthly encumbrance, and entirely united with God, shall go forth from this prison of the body without regret, as it would quit a place that was displeasing to it.

But this, perhaps, may appear a degree of perfection exceeding the powers of man, who is so miserable a being, and is placed in a position so very different from that of God's angels. To expect that men can become like the angels, is nothing less than to pretend to change earth into heaven. However this cannot appear either excessive or unreasonable, if we but reflect that our Divine Master proposed for our imitation a much more perfect model when He said: "*Be you perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect*" (Matth. v. 48). If we ought to aspire to imitate the perfection of our Heavenly Father, which is infinite, why should we wonder if it be said that we can aspire to imitate the perfection of the angels, which, though very great, is nevertheless limited? Did not Saint Paul write to the Christians of the church of Corinth: "*Be ye followers of Me, as I also am of Christ*"? (1 Cor. iv. 16). And, in truth, are not all Christians bound to be imitators of Christ, if they would justly lay claim to the honourable title of Christian? Well, Christ is very far above the angels.

It is, however, quite true that we cannot speedily attain such a degree of perfection as may possibly imitate that of the blessed spirits in heaven. If we except some very great and extraordinary case, high perfection in the order of grace is attained only by degrees, and little by little. Therefore we have need of much patience and perseverance. But, as Saint Teresa says (*Way of Perfection*, ch. 26): "*Let us not grudge spending time upon a matter in which it is so profitably employed*". We must, however, be persuaded that, though we cannot in this world attain a perfection so complete as is that of the blessed who see and enjoy God in heaven, nevertheless, we may attain a degree of perfection so exalted as to appear incredible to those who have not themselves reached it, as may be gathered from the writings of Saint Teresa and of the other contemplatives. And indeed we may see this commonly proved in the lives of the saints, who by nature were poor weak beings inclined to evil like ourselves. Wherefore, though we are but frail mortals, let us aspire to become heavenly beings, by perfectly detaching ourselves from all things here below; so that thereby we may lessen our unworthiness to invoke in union with Jesus Christ our Father who is in heaven.

Addressing herself to Christ, Saint Teresa thus continues her reflections on the first words of the Lord's Prayer (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 26): "O Son of God! and my

Lord! how great is the favour which Thou dost bestow upon us in the very first words of this prayer, while at the same time Thou dost humble Thyself to such an extreme degree, as to unite Thyself with us in our petitions, and make Thyself a brother of what is so vile and miserable! Oh, how fully dost Thou give us in Thy Father's name all that can be given, since Thou dost wish Him to take us for His sons! And since Thy word cannot fail, Thou obligest Him to keep it, which is no slight burden, since in being our Father He has to bear with us, however grievous may be our offences, if we but return to Him as did the prodigal son. He has to pardon us, He has to comfort us in our troubles, He has to support us as such a Father should do, who must of course be better than any earthly father, since there can be nothing in Him but every perfection; and as if all this were not enough, He has to make us partners and co-heirs with Thee of His kingdom."

§ 2. Of the confidence with which, in union with Jesus Christ, we ought to pray to our Heavenly Father.

We see, then, that there are two reasons why we ought to have great confidence, when we invoke our Heavenly Father in the Lord's Prayer. The first is, because we pray in union with Christ, who by accompanying us in our prayer renders it most efficacious: the second reason is, because the Father to whom we address ourselves is the best of fathers, who in

goodness and tenderness towards His children infinitely surpasses the most excellent earthly fathers.

§ 3. Who this Heavenly Father is.

Let us hear how Saint Teresa describes to us this Father, in the meditation which she sets down for Monday: "Consider," she says, "that thy Father is God in three persons and one in essence, the beginning and author of all things—a Being Himself without beginning, who is the cause of the existence of all created things—by whom we move, in whom we live and have our being, since He sustains and preserves everything. Next consider thyself, how thou art a son of a Father so powerful, that He can create an infinite number of worlds; so wise, that He could govern them all, as He governs this world of ours, without His Providence being wanting to any creature, from the highest seraphim down to the very lowest worm of the earth; so good, that, without any benefit to Himself, He is continually communicating Himself to all his creatures according to their capacity. Man, above all, should reflect and say: "Oh! how good is such a Father to me, since He was pleased that I should have existence, and should enjoy this dignity of being His son, omitting, while creating me, to create other men who would have proved better than I! Hereupon consider how much such a Father deserves to be loved and served, who, merely of His own goodness, created all things for me, and

created myself that I might serve Him and might enjoy Him."

And certainly it is very important to help ourselves as much as we can to form an exalted idea of our Heavenly Father; because the more we know of His greatness and goodness, the more easily will our heart be filled with sentiments of respect and love towards Him.

But with reference to His goodness, the inference drawn by Saint Teresa from the dispositions of earthly parents towards their offspring, merits special attention: "Here," she says, "we must ponder on the nature of parents —how they love their children, though deformed; how they maintain them, though ungrateful; how they bear with them, though unruly; how readily they forgive them, when they return home and become obedient; how while the children are entirely free from anxiety, their parents toil to increase their estate and inheritance. Reflect, likewise, how all these qualities are found in God, in an infinitely higher degree; and this consideration must melt the soul, and cause it to entertain fresh hopes of pardon both for itself and others, and moreover not to despise any one, knowing that he has such a Father who is the common Father both of men and angels."

Whereupon we must reflect that just as a child however deformed, though an object of contempt and dislike to persons in general, is nevertheless loved by his father, because paternal affection overcomes, or rather does not feel,

those natural repugnances which such a being is calculated to inspire; so, in like manner, though we are very much defiled in the most pure sight of our Heavenly Father, yet, because we are His children, He does not spurn us from Him, He does not hate us, but on the contrary loves us, and manifests this love by removing from us those deformities which ought not to be found in creatures who enjoy the privilege of being His children.

We must reflect, likewise, that though a father should experience at the hands of his children many proofs of ingratitude, which would be sufficient to cause any one else except a father to cast them off for ever, yet he does not cease to maintain them and to serve them in many ways. So, in like manner, our Heavenly Father, though He has a thousand times experienced our ingratitude, does not cease on this account to sustain us, and to shower down countless favours upon us.

Furthermore, we must reflect how fathers bear with the vices of their children, and instead of quickly punishing their misconduct, exhibit much patience towards them, in the hope that they may amend; and should the children at length show themselves repentant, their fathers are most willing to accord them the fullest pardon, no matter how often they may have transgressed and relapsed. In the same way our Heavenly Father does not chastise even one of our numberless transgressions, but waits

patiently for months and years, allowing us time for conversion; and if at length we fling ourselves at His feet in a spirit of true contrition, He bestows upon us the most ample pardon, and places no limit to the number of the sins which He is ready to forgive us.

Finally, we must reflect that fathers have a great anxiety to provide riches for their children and to settle them well in life; so that while the children themselves, either through want of reflection or through carelessness, neglect their own interests, their fathers think of everything, and make provision for everything by the most vigilant care. So, too, while we, either through natural thoughtlessness or culpable negligence, pay no heed to our spiritual interests, our Heavenly Father in a thousand ways provides for our necessities with the greatest anxiety and an abundance of grace, in order that we may not remain in that deplorable poverty which we so much deserve, but may, on the contrary, find ourselves enriched with many treasures.

§ 4 Consoling conclusion drawn by Saint Teresa.

Let us hear how Saint Teresa concludes the 27th chapter of her *Way of Perfection*:—"The good Jesus has given you a most excellent Father. . . . Endeavour, my daughters, to be such that you may deserve to enjoy His favours, throwing yourselves into His arms. You already know that He will not drive you away from Him, if you be good children. And who is there that will not endeavour not to lose such a Father?

O good God, what an opportunity is here given us for consolation! However, I will not dwell longer on this point, but will leave it entirely to your own reflection; for, no matter how confused and distracted may be your mind, between such a Father and such a Son the Holy Ghost must of necessity be; and let Him inflame your will and bind it with the closest bonds of love, since that which you possess is insufficient for so great a favour."

And surely if we consider that we have in heaven a Father so noble and so good, we shall easily understand how exalted is our own destiny, and, consequently, how holy and spotless ought to be our life, in order that we may not be altogether unworthy of being His children. Meanwhile this dignity and this destiny of ours, if we but attentively reflect upon it, will prove to us an inexhaustible fountain of the sweetest consolations and of the dearest hopes.

Words utterly fail to give a suitable commentary on the concluding sentiment of the Saint: it is too exalted and sublime. We may, however, acquire a practical knowledge of the truth which it conveys, by meditating on the excessive love of the Son of God, who at such a dear price has been pleased to purchase for us the name and the reality of being children of God, and on the excessive love of our Heavenly Father, who wished to give us His Own Son for this purpose. If we give ourselves up to such reflections, the Holy Spirit, who is the reciprocal

love of such a Father and such a Son, will inflame our hearts in an indescribable manner with His holy love.

CHAPTER III.

The First Petition continued.

LET us now see what it is that we ought to ask of our Heavenly Father. *Hallowed be Thy name.* In the following passage Saint Teresa tells us how we ought to meditate on these words: "On this occasion," she says, "you should ask for all men light and love, so that they may know Him and thank Him for so many benefits; and you should beg that all may become so virtuous and holy, that the image of God their Father may shine forth in them, and that in all things His paternal name may be glorified and sanctified, as the name of a Father who has such children that they resemble Him who created them" (*Meditation for Monday*). § 1 Substance of this Petition.

In these words of Saint Teresa, we find the true meaning of the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer, in which, as is most fitting, we ask before everything else what has reference to the honour and glory of our Heavenly Father. Now His honour and glory require that all rational creatures, capable of knowing and loving Him, should know and love Him such as He really is.

Wherefore in this Petition we beg of God that all idolators, Mahommedans, Jews and heretics may have light to know the true faith of Christ, and to practise the gospel precepts; and, moreover, that all Catholics may live in conformity with the teachings of the faith which they profess, so that as their faith is holy, their lives may be holy likewise. In this Petition we also beg that pastors of souls and all God's ministers may have that knowledge, prudence, sanctity and zeal which are necessary for the sanctification of the flock of Christ; that all Religious may be a source of edification to the faithful, by the exact observance of their rule, and by drawing down God's blessing on the world by the efficacy of their prayers. We beg, furthermore, that sinners may be converted from their evil ways, that the just may persevere in holiness, that all Christian virtues may be honoured and practised, and that the Lord may be continually blessed for all the provisions, and thanked for all the bounties, of His loving providence. Finally, we ask that all may be holy and perfect, as becomes the children of so great a Father. All this we ask for in that Petition: Hallowed be Thy name —*Sanctificetur nomen tuum.*

§ 2. Sentiments of sorrow and of joy which ought to accompany the recital of this Petition.

Saint Teresa continues as follows: "After meditating thus, there follows (by your calling to mind the many sins of men) a profound sorrow at the thought that so good a Father is offended by His ungrateful children;

and this again will be succeeded by joy, on reflecting that there are in the world servants of God in whom the sanctity of their Father shines forth. You will grieve for every sin and bad example you may see, and at the same time rejoice at every virtue which you may either know or hear of in others, thanking God for having created the holy martyrs, confessors and virgins, who have manifestly shown themselves to be the children of such a Father. After this consideration comes a feeling of confusion, for having yourself in particular offended Him, for not having appreciated His benefits, and for bearing so unworthily the name of a son of God, which of itself alone is calculated to nourish in our hearts generous and royal sentiments."

In truth, if we desire and beg in this Petition that our Heavenly Father be glorified as universally and perfectly as has been said above, and then consider, on the other hand, the enormous sins that are daily committed, and the shocking ingratitude with which men repay the infinite goodness of a Father so great and loving, it is impossible that we should not find our heart greatly saddened on this account, and filled with a lively detestation of sin. But, again, on reflecting that there always have been, and still are, in the world many persons loving God and distinguished by their great virtues, who have corresponded and daily correspond faithfully to the divine graces, who give praise to the Lord and bless His holy name, we ought to be filled

with great joy, and to bless the infinite liberality of our Heavenly Father, for having chosen for Himself these faithful souls, who thus exalt His glory, and show themselves worthy of being called His children.

And here we should call to mind the holy martyrs, who above all others have shed glory on the Church, by their invincible courage in braving for Christ's sake every kind of torture and death. We ought to remember the holy confessors, who, by practising all the virtues in a heroic degree, conferred such lustre on the Christian name. We ought to call to mind the holy virgins, who lived lives of such spotless purity, that they seemed to be something more than human, and were venerated as angels upon earth.

Oh! what a vast host these constitute of true children of God, who reflect such honour on their Heavenly Father! And here one might exclaim with Saint Teresa: "Rejoice my soul, that there is some one who loves thy God as He deserves. Rejoice that there is some one who knows His goodness and His worth. Return Him thanks for having given us upon earth some one who thus knows Him" (*Exclam.* 7).

After these reflections the Christian soul ought to cast a glance upon itself, reflecting on its own sins and ingratitude, whereby it has rendered itself unworthy of the name and of the reality of being God's child, and this thought ought to fill it with sentiments of profound humility.

§ 3. Exercise of faith, and desires for the sanctification of souls.

Saint Teresa remarks: "The day that you devote to this Petition (making it the object of your prayer) you ought to refer everything to this consideration. For example, if you should happen to see any pictures of our Lord, you ought to say: This is my Father; if you look up to the heavens, say: There is my Father's house; when you hear a spiritual lecture, say: This is a letter sent me by my Father; when you look upon the clothes you wear, on the food you take, or when anything happens to make you joyful, say: All these things came from my Father's hand. If anything makes you sad, or causes you trouble or pain; if you are tried by temptations or adversity, say: All this comes to me from the hand of my Father, to try me, and to give me an opportunity of meriting a richer crown; and filled with such sentiments, repeat with all the affection of your heart—*Hallowed be Thy name.*

"By means of this consideration and the exercise of the presence of God, let the soul force herself to appear (as she really is) God's child, and to be grateful for so many benefits conferred upon her, rejoicing exceedingly in seeing herself a daughter of God, a sister of Jesus Christ, heir of His kingdom, and a partner of Christ Himself in this inheritance. And when the soul knows that the kingdom of God is hers, she will desire that all may be holy, in order that the boundaries of that kingdom may be extended; for the more holy souls are

multiplied, the greater will be her portion of the inheritance."

Wherefore it will be of great advantage, even outside the time of prayer, to place ourselves in the presence of our Heavenly Father, recognising Him in all His works, and receiving everything as coming from His hands; but the soul ought, above all things else, to rejoice because of her ineffable privilege of being a daughter of God, a sister of Christ, heir to His kingdom, and co-heir with Christ Himself—a privilege compared with which all other possible privileges are not worthy even to be named.

The soul will thereby come to desire ardently that all men should be saints, in order that God's kingdom might be enlarged—that is to say, on earth in His Church, and in heaven for all eternity; because the more numerous the fruits of sanctity will become, the greater shall be the soul's share in them both here and hereafter. And in truth in proportion as holy souls are multiplied here on earth, the more widely is good example given, the more numerous are the fervent prayers that are poured forth to God, and the more copiously are heaven's blessings rained down upon men; and, again, in proportion as the merits of the saints in heaven are more resplendent, the greater the happiness which will be derived from them by their companions in bliss—for in heaven each one rejoices in the happiness of another, as though it were his own.

And here we may observe, that the constant

desire and prayer of holy souls ought to be, that God would raise up many saints in His Church —and great saints—to shed a lustre upon her, to comfort her and to defend her, as has been done in the past by so many whom we now venerate upon her altars. Oh, what incalculable good would be effected in this age of so much coldness and religious indifference, if we only had many great saints!

Ah! pious souls, beg this favour unceasingly of the Lord: beg of Him not to be influenced by the multitude of our sins, but, turning aside His face from them, to allow Himself to be overcome by His own infinite mercy, and to send many great saints of both sexes into His Church.

§ 4. Prayer of the Book of Ecclesiasticus.

Here I am unwilling to omit the beautiful prayer which is found in the 36th chapter of the Book of Ecclesiasticus, and in which the above-mentioned grace is asked with many others—a prayer which is in reality the explanation of the Petition: *Sanctificetur nomen tuum.* "Have mercy upon us, O God of all, and behold us, and show us the light of Thy mercies: and send Thy fear upon the nations that have not sought after Thee, that they may know that there is no God beside Thee, and that they may show forth Thy wonders. Lift up Thy hand over the strange nations, that they may see Thy power. For as Thou hast been sanctified in us in their sight, so Thou shalt be magnified among them in our presence, that they may know Thee, as we also

have known Thee, that there is no good beside Thee, O Lord. Renew Thy signs and work new miracles. Glorify Thy hand and Thy right arm. . . . Take away (from us) the adversary, and crush the enemy. Hasten the time (of Thy mercies), and remember the end that they may declare Thy wonderful works. . . . Gather together all the tribes of Jacob (all the people that have separated from Thy Church), that they may know that there is no God besides Thee, and may declare Thy great works, and Thou shalt inherit them as from the beginning. Have mercy upon this people upon whom Thy name is invoked. . . . Fill Sion (Thy beloved Church) with Thy unspeakable words, and Thy people with Thy glory. Give testimony to them that are Thy creatures (in Christ) from the beginning (through baptism), and raise up the prophecies which the former prophets spoke in Thy name. Reward them that patiently wait for Thee, that Thy prophets may be found faithful, and hear the prayers of Thy servants, according to the blessing of Aaron over Thy people, and direct us into the way of justice, and let all know that dwell upon the earth, that Thou art God, the beholder of all ages."

§ 5. Conclusion of Saint Teresa.

Saint Teresa concludes the Meditation set down for Monday with the following words: "Here we may very appropriately consider those first words spoken by our Saviour from the Cross: *Father forgive them,*

for they know not what they do; because in these words the tender bowels of God's mercy are made known to us. Moved by the thoughts which these words will suggest, we may elicit acts of charity towards those who have injured us, and prepare ourselves for enduring patiently the greatest wrongs. The story of the Prodigal Son also comes in very appropriately here, in which is so vividly represented a father's pity for a son that was first lost, and then found again and restored to his former dignity."

Inasmuch as we shall have to speak in the Fifth Petition of the love of our neighbour, and especially of those who have injured us, we will say nothing on that subject at present. It will be, however, very profitable to touch upon the parable of the Prodigal Son to which the Saint alludes—a parable which, perhaps, above all others, conveys the most perfect idea of the goodness of our Heavenly Father, and most clearly makes known to us what ungrateful children we are.

§ 6. Parable of the Prodigal Son.

There was once a father, said our Divine Lord, who had two sons. The younger, grown weary of parental restraint, and anxious to live as he pleased, giving free rein to his passions, besought his father to give him his portion of the property that should fall to him, that he might spend it as he should think fit. The father opposed this foolish project as resolutely as he could; he pointed out how much he was

pained and displeased by the determination which his son had taken; but in the end was forced to yield to his demand, in order to satisfy his rebellious child. The property was accordingly divided: the younger son obtained his portion; and being thenceforward freed from every restraint, was left at liberty to dispose of himself as he might please.

The foolish and disobedient youth immediately sold all that he possessed; and having thus realised a large sum of money, for his portion of the inheritance was considerable, he resolved on abandoning his home altogether, so that he might nevermore be compelled to listen to the warnings, the advice, or the reproofs of his good father. He set out accordingly for a distant land, and thenceforward his family lost sight of him.

The large sum of money which he had taken with him enabled him to lead a gay and pleasant life, and he fancied himself so rich that he could never know poverty. However, he fell in with a number of dissolute companions, who led him into all kinds of extravagance and dissipation, so that in a short time the unfortunate youth had squandered all his substance, and found himself penniless. The moment he was thus reduced to poverty, his former associates disowned him, and cast him off with jeers and insults.

Just then a terrible famine happened to visit the country in which he tarried, and the poor

young man was forced to herd swine, at wages so low that he almost died of hunger, and would fain have eaten of the very food which the swine consumed, but even this was denied him.

Reduced to this pitiable condition, he at length began to realise the evil of his ways, the heinousness of his crimes, and above all the wrong he had done his good father, which almost drove him to despair, since it seemed to him so great as to exclude all hope of pardon. On reflecting, however, that his only chance of saving his life was to throw himself upon the loving compassion of his father's heart, which he already knew by experience to be boundless, he resolved to return to him, to make a full confession of his outrageous misconduct, and to beg for pity's sake to be admitted once more into his old home, no longer as a son but as a servant.

Barefooted and clad in filthy rags, he travelled back again the long and weary road that led to the home of his childhood, and, exhausted by fatigue and hunger, he at length came within view of his father's house. Oh! who can imagine the bitterness of his remorse, the agony of his shame at that moment! But his father has already seen him coming: he runs forward to meet him, and just as the repentant son is about to fling himself at his feet, he embraces him and kisses him in a transport of joy, and love, and tenderness, as though he had been the best and most dutiful of children. He quickly orders that he be clad in the richest

garments which his wardrobe could supply, he places on his finger a valuable ring, he directs that a great banquet be prepared to celebrate the joyful event, and he lavished such kindness upon the dissolute, ungrateful child, who returned to him only when constrained to do so by the pangs of hunger, that he excited feelings of jealousy in the breast of his good and dutiful elder son, who had never yet received any special mark of his favour, after many years of obedience, reverence, and faithful service. "Behold," said the elder son to his father, "for many years I have served you faithfully and have never annoyed you by the least act of disobedience, yet you have never given me even a kid wherewith to make merry with my friends; and now when thy younger son returns, after having squandered all his substance in the company of the lowest and most abandoned wretches, you feast him with a fatted calf." But his good father mildly replied to him: "My son, you have been always with me, and all that I possess is yours; but it is only fitting that I should now make merry and be glad, because your brother, whom I might heretofore have regarded as dead to me, has come to life again: he was lost and is found".

In this parable we see, in the first place, the folly and obstinacy with which the sinner abandons his Heavenly Father, and forfeits to the devil whatever good he may have stored up for life eternal. In the next place, we see the

miserable and most unhappy condition to which he is reduced, when he gives himself up to gratifying his passions, which are more filthy than the very swine; and we see, too, the consequent awakening to a sense of his position, and the accompanying feeling of repentance, whereby he is brought back to the feet of his Heavenly Father, in the hope of obtaining from him a little mercy. But in the reception accorded to the Prodigal Son by his father, we see the infinite goodness of God, which exceeds the most ardent desires and the highest expectations of the contrite sinner; so that He sometimes loads him with favours which are calculated almost to excite envy in the hearts of the just, who have always acted the part of most faithful and dutiful children. It is to such favours that Saint Teresa alludes when, speaking of sinners, she says that "though they be in a bad state and destitute of virtues, God nevertheless gives them consolations, caresses, and tokens of endearment, by which He begins to instil into them good desires, and even sometimes brings them to contemplation" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 16).

CHAPTER IV.

On the Second Petition: Thy Kingdom come.

BEFORE continuing our reflections on the Lord's

Prayer, we must call attention to a remark made by Saint Teresa at the beginning of the first Meditation: "Although the name of Father," she says, "is that which best agrees with all these petitions and affords us the greatest confidence, and is that by which our Lord was pleased to bind Himself to grant whatever we ask of Him, nevertheless we will not be acting contrary to His wish and command, in adding other titles also which so truly belong to Him—the more so, since our devotion is excited thereby, and by renewing the fuel the fire is kindled on the altar of our heart, and our confidence is strengthened by the thought that to our Father belong also those other titles so glorious to Him and so advantageous to us".

The titles to which the saint alludes are those of *King*, *Spouse*, *Pastor*, *Redeemer*, *Physician*, and *Judge*, each of which corresponds to the substance of one of the petitions which yet remain to be considered by us. Wherefore, while the title of *Father* must be understood to belong to every one of the petitions of this prayer without exception, yet to each of the remaining petitions another title will be superadded, selected from those six mentioned above. Thus, for example: "*Our Sovereign Lord, Thy Kingdom come*"; "*Spouse of our Souls, Thy will be done*," &c.; and there is not the slightest doubt that all these titles will furnish matter for many excellent pious thoughts and affections.

Let us begin with the first of the above-mentioned titles — *Our Sovereign Lord! Thy Kingdom come*—and let us hear how Saint Teresa speaks on the subject in the Meditation set down for Tuesday: "This Petition," she says, "follows very naturally from the preceding one, since a father's kingdom belongs to his children. Say then to your Heavenly Father: 'Since the world, the devil, and the flesh reign upon earth, do Thou reign over us as our King, and destroy in our souls these kingdoms of avarice, pride, and sensuality'.

§ 1. Substance of the Second Petition.

"This Petition may be understood in either of two ways—either as requesting our Lord to grant us possession of the kingdom of heaven, which belongs to us as His children, or as beseeching Him that He would reign in us, and that we may become His kingdom. Both these interpretations are Catholic, and in accordance with Holy Writ, as theologians assure me. For in the first of these senses Christ our Lord has said: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom that was prepared for you from the beginning of the world;* and in the second sense, Saint John writes that the blessed will say in heaven: *Thou hast redeemed us, O Lord, in Thy blood . . . and hast made us to our God a kingdom.* In both senses there is a wonderful hidden meaning, and it is this, that when God speaks to us, He says that He is our kingdom; and when we speak to Him, we bless Him

because we are His kingdom; and thus do we mutually give pleasure, by exchanging these heavenly compliments. Truly, I do not know which of the two confers the greater dignity on man; whether it is that God should be delighted to have us for His kingdom and to remain satisfied with such a possession, being the infinite Lord that He is, or that He should be pleased to constitute Himself our Kingdom, and to give Himself to be our possession. Of the two, however, I like best for the present the idea of our being God's kingdom, because it follows from it that He is our King."

We may remark that there is no need of proving that the title of "Our King" belongs to the Lord God. It is given to Him times without number in Holy Writ, and every pious soul invokes him, with David, as "*My King and my God*"—*Rex meus et Deus meus.* We must, however, understand well that He is both our King and our Kingdom. He is our King, because He ought to reign in our hearts as a king does in his kingdom, claiming there a full tribute of obedience and of love; but He is also our Kingdom, when our soul, having acquired the true liberty of the children of God by entire submission to His divine will, enjoys full dominion over all things and over all worldly attachments, so that it then feels the truth of that saying: *To serve God is to reign.* Then the soul, possessed by God, feels herself a queen, inasmuch as she has God united to her:

however, in a far higher sense will God be both our King and our Kingdom in heaven, in a manner which at present surpasses both our intelligence and our power of description.

Wherefore, Saint Teresa well remarks that in this petition we beg of the Lord the *kingdom of His glory* in the world to come, which belongs to us as His children; and also the *kingdom of His grace* in this temporal life, by means of which He reigns in our heart, since, as we have seen in the first chapter, it is nothing else than the seed or germ of that same glory which is reserved for us in heaven. Consequently, in this Petition we beg of our Supreme King the highest possible blessing that we can enjoy both here and hereafter.

§ 2. What our chief anxiety ought to be.

Let us once again hear St. Teresa, as she goes on to administer the greatest consolation to us on our happy lot in being God's kingdom, and in having God for our kingdom: "The Lord once said to Saint Catharine of Siena, '*Think of Me, and I will think of thee*'; and to a certain Religious (it was Saint Teresa herself) He said, '*Take care of My affairs, and I will take care of yours*'. Let us then study to become such that His Divine Majesty may feel a pleasure in reigning in our souls, and thus He will be pleased that we should reign in Him. This is that kingdom of which the same Divine Lord said in His gospel: '*Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God . . . . and be not solicitous*

(about temporal affairs), *for your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things'*. And of this kingdom Saint Paul has also said that '*it is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost'*.

"Let us consider, then, what ought to be the character and dispositions of those in whom God glories that He is their king, and they that they are His kingdom. How fitting it is that they should be adorned with every virtue, discreet in speech, high minded, humble, meek, and modest in their deportment! How pure of heart they ought to be, and how innocent in their thoughts! How patient ought they to be in suffering, how loving towards one another, how peaceful and composed in all their actions! How free from envy they should be, and how desirous of promoting the happiness of all men!"

We ought to pay particular attention to the counsel here given us by Saint Teresa, when she exhorts us to have no other care or anxiety about ourselves, except that God should reign in us; and she assures us that if we but do so, it will certainly come to pass that we shall reign in Him. This involves the entire surrender into the hands of God's providence of all our own particular interests, our sole anxiety being about the glory of God.

And since Saint Teresa alludes to the words addressed by our Lord to Saint Catharine of Siena—*Daughter, think of Me, and I will think of thee*—it is well to know how that Saint herself understood these words. She interprets

them thus: "Daughter, be not at all solicitous either about the salvation of your soul or the health of your body, because I, who know and can accomplish all that is needful for both, am willing to concern Myself about them, and anxious to make provision for them. Let it be your sole study to think of Me and to meditate upon Me, because in this consists your perfection and your supreme happiness."

In accordance with this teaching, whenever she saw persons anxious and troubled about impending evils—even though they should be serious and imminent—she would say to them "*What business have you to be thinking about yourself?*" And it is told that on one occasion, when she was making a voyage in company with Blessed Raymond, her confessor, and a fierce storm threatened to wreck the vessel, Blessed Raymond showed signs of fear; but Saint Catharine immediately restored his courage by saying to him, "*What concern of yours is your safety?*" (*Life*, p. 1, ch. 10).

Wherefore if we wish to dispose ourselves properly to become God's kingdom, we must attend solely to pleasing God in everything that concerns us, without entertaining any anxiety or disquieting fear, even for the salvation of our souls, which cannot possibly be better provided for than when we abandon ourselves without reserve to God's holy will, doing on our own part, quietly and tranquilly, all that it is fitting we should do.

And, in truth, it is quite evident that we cannot possibly seek to give God pleasure in all things, without at the same time striving for the eternal salvation of our souls—nay, more, that to seek solely to give pleasure to God means to seek solely our eternal salvation. Happy shall we be, therefore, if we but succeed in abandoning ourselves so entirely into the hands of God, that, as Saint Catharine said, we shall no longer have any concern about ourselves or our affairs, but shall consider it our only business to give pleasure to our Supreme Lord, by faithfully attending to the execution of His divine will. In this manner, adorned with the choicest virtues as befits God's happy subjects, we shall certainly be among the number of those over whom He especially delights to reign, and we shall feel within our hearts that kingdom of God which is *justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Romans xiv. 17).

§ 3. Our special obligations towards our Supreme King.

Of the special obligations which we have towards God, our King, Saint Teresa speaks as follows: "Let us consider how good subjects conduct themselves towards their king, and by so doing we will raise our thoughts to the King of heaven, and learn how *we* ought to conduct ourselves towards Him.

"In an earthly kingdom we all live under one and the same law, which we are bound to observe, helping one another, and supplying one to another such necessaries as we may have and

our neighbour may want. It is our duty to lay down our property and our lives for our king, and to seek to please him in all things. In our grievances we must have recourse to him for justice, and in our necessities for relief. We are all bound to serve him—each one according to his own special talent and ability—without harbouring any feeling of jealousy towards our neighbour. The soldier must serve him in war, the clerk in his office, the farmer in his farm. The gentleman, the man of letters, the sailor, and every other person, even though he should never have seen his king, must endeavour to serve him, and desire to see him; even the reaper in the fields, as he sweats over his daily toil, must rejoice that the king has some intimate friends with whom he may enjoy himself and take recreation. And if sometimes the king should manifest a particular esteem for any one, all vie one with another in honouring and respecting that person; and it is the desire and aim of all to serve the king in peace and quietness."

Such are the feelings and such is the conduct of good subjects towards good kings. Let us now see how Saint Teresa applies this standard to all of us, in our quality of subjects of the King of heaven. "Let us now," she says, "run over these characteristics of a well-regulated kingdom, and, by applying them to the subjects under consideration, we shall see that what we beg of Almighty God is, that His laws may be observed, and He Himself well served, and that His sub-

jects may live in peace and tranquillity. We beg also that our souls, in which God has established His kingdom, may be regulated in such manner as to be worthy of this honour; that the republic of our mental powers may be very obedient to Him; that our intellect may be firm in faith; that our will may be resolute in the observance of His holy laws, even though it should cost us our lives; that all the faculties of our soul may be so submissive, as to offer no resistance to His divine will; that our passions and desires may be under such control as not to murmur against the precepts imposed by charity, but on the contrary, free from every envious and jealous feeling, to view with satisfaction whatever good fortune may fall to our neighbour's lot, even though it should be denied to ourselves—nay, more, to rejoice at seeing this Lord reigning on earth and in heaven, being perfectly satisfied, as far as we ourselves are concerned, to serve Him as common menials, and regarding it as an honour to be employed in any capacity whatever in His kingdom. Finally, we beg that He alone may be served and obeyed, and may reign over us and dispose of us (of myself in particular and of each one else) as Supreme King and Lord of all men."

§ 4. Of the disinterestedness with which we ought to serve God.

All these things which we have just mentioned are very clear; and we can quite easily understand how we owe them as a tribute of homage to our Supreme King. Nevertheless, we

must call special attention to the holy disinterestedness with which we ought to serve God in whatever state He may have placed us, being content with such gifts as He has bestowed upon us. For we must bear in mind that, besides the invisible and interior kingdom of God already mentioned, whereby God reigns in our hearts through sanctifying grace, there is another exterior and visible kingdom—that is to say, the Holy Catholic Church, in which all the Faithful are His subjects and vassals. Now, just as in a well-regulated earthly kingdom there are many offices to be filled, and consequently many ranks and grades of men—some of them being more highly favoured than others, according to their merits and capacity, and those that are loyal being content with their position and satisfied to co-operate, as far as in them lies, in promoting the general good of the kingdom, without envying those placed over them, or aspiring to exceptional favours of which they deem themselves unworthy—so, too, in the Catholic Church, which is God's spiritual kingdom, there are various grades and classes of persons. Of these, some are appointed to be in immediate attendance on their Divine King, while others are not brought by their duties into such close relations with Him; and the divine favours are distributed among these various classes, in proportion to the duties and services which they are called upon to discharge. In the Church there is a hierarchy of sacred

ministers, divided into several orders: there are regulars and seculars; there are married people and celibates; there are those who have received the graces necessary and suitable for working out their salvation, and again, others who have received extraordinary and wonderful graces, which are never distributed at random, as we in our ignorance sometimes seem to think, but according to the rules of an infinite wisdom, which we ought always to adore, but never curiously investigate. And just as in an earthly kingdom, so, too, in this kingdom of God each one of us must be satisfied with the position in which Divine Providence has placed him; nor ought we to aspire to anything above this, our sole aim being to co-operate, as far as it may lie in our power, in promoting the good of the Church, which substantially is nothing else than the glory of God.

From this it follows, that every Christian ought to be satisfied at having been placed by God in that position which was most agreeable to His infinite wisdom, nor ought he to envy others who have been treated with special distinction; but considering himself, as he really is, unworthy of the least favour, he ought to rest content with what has been given to him, whether that be much or little. His sole aim, the one object of his life, ought to be to serve God well in his own particular state, and to correspond faithfully to all the graces which he receives from His hands, desiring solely to

improve continually, and to become daily more perfect in God's holy love, and in conforming himself to the divine will. In doing this he will be discharging a duty which is imposed on every one, and in fulfilling which we can never do too much.

When a person who is animated by these dispositions sees others placed by God in an exalted position, and so to speak kept in closer proximity to Him, as happens in the case of ecclesiastics and religious persons; when he sees some singularly favoured by God with the gift of rare virtues, extraordinary lights, and special privileges, he sincerely rejoices with God, and in union with these chosen souls he blesses the divine goodness for its most wise distribution of its gifts. And so satisfied is he with the dispositions of Providence, that if it were in his power to enjoy the same privileges—I won't say in opposition to, but independently of, God's will—he would reject them all, merely reserving to himself to admire them, to praise them, and to wish them to exist there only where the will of his Beloved King has established them.

We can imagine nothing which is calculated to give greater pleasure to God than a disposition of this kind. And, in truth, what more convincing proof of loyalty and love could a subject give his sovereign, than not to wish even for riches and honours except in such measure as may be pleasing to the sovereign himself, and to reject every favour the acceptance of which might not

be perfectly agreeable to his sovereign's will? This will prove an exercise of very great merit and of sweetest consolation to every one that really loves God, namely, to rejoice and bless the Lord whenever he sees any of his neighbours more favoured than himself; to endeavour to rejoice thereat even more than if these same favours had been bestowed upon himself; and even to praise the Lord, because He has been pleased to communicate these gifts to others rather than to himself, looking upon all others as more deserving, more useful, and better disposed to correspond with such graces and to turn them to good account. In this manner we combine profound humility with disinterested love, the former being the foundation, the latter the apex, of Christian perfection.

In connection with this matter, it may not be out of place to mention the advice given to her novices by another great Carmelite saint—Saint Mary Magdalen de Pazzi—namely, *that each of them should ask for one degree of grace for herself, and two degrees for her companions;* and she assigned as a reason for doing so, that they should look upon their companions as more deserving than themselves, and more likely to correspond faithfully to grace, and thus give greater glory to God (Puccini, *Life*, chap. 104). And worthy of record, also, is that beautiful saying to which she once gave utterance in an ecstasy, when she saw how, in the time of interior trial, she would be deprived of all spiritual en-

joyment: "Having no spiritual delights myself, I will remain alone in a corner looking at all the other nuns, my companions. . . . I will consider that I have all the favours which they have; and although I shall not enjoy them, charity, which makes all things common, will enable me to enjoy while not enjoying, merely by enjoying the enjoyment of others" (chap. 113).

§ 5. Manner in which Saint Teresa concludes this meditation.

Saint Teresa concludes this meditation, by contemplating Jesus crowned with thorns, and hailed in derision as "King of the Jews". "Here," she says, "that incident very appropriately comes in, when Pilate brought forth our Redeemer after he had been falsely charged, and exhibited Him before the people, crowned with thorns, bearing a reed in his hand for a sceptre, and clad in an old purple garment, while he cried out, '*Behold the King of the Jews*'. Instead of the blasphemies and scoffs in which the soldiers and the Jews indulged on that occasion, let you, after having adored Him with the greatest reverence, make acts of humility, accompanied by ardent desires that the honours and praises of this world may prove to *us* a crown of thorns."

This will be a very devout contemplation; because the sight of our King—the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and earth—reduced to such an extremity of suffering and derision for our sake, and crowned with thorns that we may hereafter be crowned with glory, will inflame our hearts with the liveliest desires that we, too, might do

and suffer something in His service, and prove our gratitude towards Him. The more we shall see the infinite majesty of this our King tortured and insulted for our sake, the more will we humble ourselves before Him, and the better shall we understand how dear to us ought to be the sufferings and contempt which we have to endure for Him. Nay, as Saint Teresa remarks, we will even desire that the honours and praises of the world should become so hateful to us, as to prove to us a very crown of thorns.

CHAPTER V.

The Second Petition continued

§ 1. Consummate perfection is God's kingdom on earth.

In the 30th chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, Saint Teresa gives another explanation of this Petition, understanding by the kingdom of God a state of the soul so perfect, that it rivals and imitates, as far as is possible in this life, the condition of the blessed in heaven. She speaks of it as follows: "The chief happiness which seems to me to be reserved for the elect in the kingdom of heaven (among many other joys), is an utter disregard of the things of this earth; for which there is substituted among those blessed souls a calm repose, an enjoyment of their own beatitude, a rejoicing in the happiness

of others, a perpetual peace and a great satisfaction in themselves, which come to them from seeing that there all honour God and bless His holy name, while none offend Him. All in that happy abode love Him, and the soul herself attends to nothing else but to love Him, nor can she cease to love Him, because she knows Him. And so we, too, did we but know Him, should love Him in this world, not indeed in so perfect a degree or with such constancy as the blessed do, but yet in a manner very different from that in which we love Him at present. It might seem as though I were about to say that we ought to be angels in order to offer up such a petition as this. And yet our Divine Master would wish that we should aspire to this, since He commands us to offer up this sublime Petition, and surely He does not suggest to us to ask for impossibilities. And, in truth, there is no reason why a soul placed in this land of exile should not be able, with the divine assistance, to reach this degree of union with God and quiet spiritual enjoyment, though she can never attain it so perfectly as those holy souls do who have already gone forth from this prison of the body; for we are yet upon the world's tempest-tossed sea, and have not yet reached our journey's end."

It is impossible, as Saint Teresa says in the concluding sentence of this extract, to attain while in this world that perfection which is reserved for us in heaven. *We are still upon*

the tempest-tossed sea, far from the harbour of rest; we are still *travellers* far from our home; nevertheless, even in this life, we may attain a degree of perfection so high that it is called *consummate*, having regard to what is possible in our present condition, in which we see God only "through a glass in a dark manner," and do not see Him as He really is in His unveiled glory. In this state of consummate perfection, the soul, as Saint Thomas says, is always advancing, because as long as she remains in this world, she must go on continually perfecting herself in love; and yet her chief anxiety no longer is simply to make progress in love, but rather to cling to God by love—"*Perfecti etiam in charitate proficiunt, sed non est ad hoc principalis eorum cura; sed jam eorum studium circa hoc maxime versatur, ut Deo inhaereant*" (St. Thom., 2, 2, q. 24, 2, 9). Saint Philip Neri used to call this last degree of perfection *an angelic life, which those attained who, having for a long time exercised themselves in subduing their passions, receive from God the reward of a quiet, tranquil, and almost angelic life even in this world*" (Bacci, *Life*, book 2, chap. 21).

In this state of union and heavenly peace, the soul experiences the best foretaste of paradise which it is possible to enjoy in this world, and its interior life is a picture of heaven. It no longer feels the slightest concern for the things of earth; it experiences a quiet interior joy, which the devil cannot disturb or embitter It

rejoices and is glad, in seeing that from everything God derives glory for Himself and advantage for His elect. It understands that, despite all the malice of men and demons, God's holy will—which is the only will the soul recognises—is executed unchallenged in heaven, on earth, and in hell. It knows and feels that God is entirely loveable, not only in His mercy, but also in His justice; for in Him justice and mercy and every other attribute are one only thing—namely, His most simple infinite goodness. Then the soul feels such a sweet and powerful attraction of love uniting it and binding it to God, that it seems as though this bond never could be broken or loosened. In these interior lights and consolations it experiences a secret heaven, so sweetly and so intensely that no tongue—not even the soul itself—could describe in words the transports of delight which it feels. In such moments it enjoys, as far as it is possible to do so, heaven upon earth.

However, as Saint Teresa remarks, it would be a great mistake to suppose that the soul will remain permanently in this state of bliss and glory. From time to time, the soul enjoys this kingdom of God, as if she were stationed amidst the glories of Thabor; but then at other times she is visited with the tortures of the Cross, as if her place were on Calvary. For in this world there can be no comfort so unalloyed as to be enduring; because to the very end it is a place of trial even for the holiest souls.

§ 2. The Prayer of Quiet.

By the kingdom of God Saint Teresa understands, moreover, the *Prayer of Quiet*, or the beginning of supernatural contemplation; and since, as she says in the 15th chapter of her *Life*, "very many souls reach this state," it is well to hear how she describes it: "It occasionally happens, that when some persons are weary of travelling (*i.e.*, by over-taxing their powers in mental or vocal prayer), our Lord places them in a state in which they enjoy tranquillity and repose of the powers of the soul, whereby they clearly understand, as if by a foretaste, how sweet is that enjoyment which His Divine Majesty gives to those whom He brings to His kingdom: and to those on whom He bestows this favour in the present life (as we beg of Him to do in this Petition), He gives certain pledges and signs, that by means of them they may entertain a great hope of going to enjoy for eternity, that which they are permitted only to sip here below" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 30).

"This (Prayer of Quiet) is indeed a something supernatural, which we never can acquire by our own endeavours, no matter how earnestly we may strive to do so. For it is a settling-down of the soul in peace, or, to speak more correctly, our Lord places her in a state of peace by His divine presence, as He once did holy Simeon, because all her faculties are calmed. The soul then understands, in a manner entirely different from understanding by means of the bodily

senses, that she is already close to God, and that but a little more would make her quite one with Him by means of the union of love. This effect is not produced through her seeing Him with the eyes of the body or with those of the soul; just as holy Simeon saw no outward appearance to indicate who the blessed little Infant was, except the poor swaddling clothes in which He was wrapped and the few attendants who accompanied Him—circumstances which might have led him to conclude that the Infant was the child of poor parents, rather than the Son of the eternal God—and yet the child Himself made known to him who He was. So, in like manner, the soul that enjoys the Prayer of Quiet knows that God is near her, though she does not know it with the same clearness that holy Simeon did; because she herself does not know how she understands it, except that she sees herself in the kingdom (or at all events near the King who is to give it to her), and seems overpowered by such a feeling of reverence, that she does not even dare to ask for anything. It is, as it were, a swoon which comes over all the powers of the body and the soul, so that the exterior man (by which, that you may understand me the better, I mean the body), does not wish to move at all, but, like one who has almost reached his journey's end, takes rest, in order to be the better able to push forward again, since in this state one's strength is redoubled for this purpose. Meanwhile one feels great corporal

delight, and great satisfaction in the soul. The soul is so delighted merely at seeing herself near the fountain, that even without drinking she is already satisfied, nor does there seem to be anything more for her to desire. Her faculties are so quiet that they will not make the least movement, because everything seems to disturb the progress of her love. And yet all this while the faculties of the soul are not lost, because they are able to think who it is that is near them; for two of them, the memory and the understanding, are free. The will, however, is in these circumstances a captive, and if she can feel any pain in being in this condition, it is to see that she must, later on, return to her former liberty. The intellect is unwilling to understand more than one thing (*i.e.*, love), nor will the memory occupy itself with anything else: in this state they see that this alone is necessary, and that everything else is a hindrance to it. They would not have the body stir, because they think that thereby they might lose the perfect peace they enjoy, and so they do not dare to make the slightest movement. Speaking becomes painful to them, and it may take them an entire hour even to say one "Our Father". They are so close to God, that they perceive they are understood by signs. They are in the palace, close beside their King, and they see that He already begins to give them His kingdom even in this world. Hereupon, sometimes, certain sweet and delicious tears begin to flow. They feel as though they were

no longer in the world, and they do not wish either to see or to hear of anything else except their God. Nothing troubles them, nor does it seem possible that anything could do so. In fine, so long as they continue in this state, they are so inebriated with the interior satisfaction and delight which they experience, that they do not remember that there is anything else to desire, but would willingly exclaim with Saint Peter, '*Lord, let us make here three tabernacles*'.

"In this Prayer of Quiet, God sometimes bestows another favour. . . . When this state of quiet is great and protracted for a considerable time, it seems to me that if the will were not attached to something, it could not continue so long in the enjoyment of that peace; for it happens that we (I speak of those who have it), go on in this way for a day or two, during which we experience this satisfaction and do not understand ourselves. And, in truth, persons who are in this state see that they are not entirely taken up with whatever they may be doing, but that they want the chief thing, namely, the will, which, in my opinion, is united with God, and leaves the other faculties free to attend to matters appertaining to His service, for which they then possess far greater ability than at other times, though in all that concerns worldly affairs they are dull and, if I may say so, stupid. This is a great grace to whomsoever the Lord grants it, because they thus combine the active with the contemplative life. Our Lord is then served by

all our powers; because the will is absorbed in loving contemplation, and goes on with her work without knowing how she works, while the other two powers are performing the part of Martha, so that she and Mary walk hand in hand. I know a person who was often favoured by our Lord with this kind of prayer, and did not understand it or how it could take place, until she questioned a great contemplative on the subject, who told her that her not understanding it was very possible, and that the same had happened to himself. Wherefore I am of opinion that since the soul is so content and satisfied in this Prayer of Quiet, it is because the will, especially during all that time, must be united to Him who alone can perfectly satisfy it."

She afterwards tries to make us understand the manner of this Prayer of Quiet by the following comparisons. "The soul (in the Prayer of Quiet) is like an infant not yet weaned, lying at its mother's breast; and she, to please him, presses the milk into his mouth, without the least effort on his part. So it is in this kind of prayer; for, without any labour on the part of the understanding, the will goes on loving, and the Lord wishes that, without thinking on it, the soul should know that she is conversing with Him, and she has but to swallow that milk which His Majesty places in her mouth, and enjoy its sweetness by knowing that it is the Lord who gives it to her, and revel in this enjoyment. But let her not desire to know how she

enjoys it, nor what it is that she does enjoy, nor let her have any concern about herself, because He that is beside her will not neglect to provide what is suitable for her. . . . When the soul has attained to this degree of prayer, it seems as though the Eternal Father had already granted her petition, namely, to give her in this world His kingdom" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 31).

But since Saint Teresa speaks elsewhere also of this Prayer of Quiet, and especially in the 14th chapter of her *Life*, we will add here a few extracts:—"The will is occupied in such a way that, without knowing how, it is seized and made captive; it consents that God alone should thus hold it captive, since it well knows that it is the captive of Him whom it loves. O Jesus, my Lord, of what advantage does this love prove to us here, since it holds our love so fast bound as not to leave us free at that moment to love anything else than Thee! . . . This water, the source of those great blessings and graces which our Lord gives us in the Prayer of Quiet, causes our virtues to increase immeasurably more than in the other kind of prayer mentioned above (*i.e.*, *devout, but not supernatural prayer*), because the soul now begins to rise up out of her misery, and there is already given to her a slight foretaste of the joys of heavenly glory. This, I believe, makes her advance the more in virtue, and approach nearer to the true virtue—that is, to God, whence all other virtues proceed. Then His

Divine Majesty begins to communicate Himself to this soul, and He wishes that she should know the manner in which He does so. When the soul has arrived at this point, she immediately begins to lose all desire of the things of this world, and to hold them of no account; because she clearly sees that not even for a single moment could one succeed in deriving a like happiness from the things of earth, and that no riches, or power, or delights, or honours are capable of affording us, even for an instant, the least idea of this supreme pleasure, which we feel satisfies us, simply because it is real pleasure. But as to the pleasures of the world, it seems to me wonderful how we can imagine that they satisfy us at all; because they are never without some accompanying bitterness, whereas during the progress of the Prayer of Quiet everything is delight, and the bitterness only comes afterwards, when we find that it is finished."

Again, in the 15th chapter, she says: "This kind of prayer is a little spark of God's true love, which the Lord begins to kindle in the soul, and by heaping favours upon her, He wishes that she should understand the nature of this love. . . . This little spark, introduced into the soul by God, though it be extremely small, makes a great noise, and if it be not extinguished by one's own fault, it immediately begins to kindle the great fire, which (as I shall say in the proper place), sends forth from it flames of the most intense love of God, such as

His Divine Majesty causes perfect souls to enjoy. This little spark is a token or pledge which God gives to that soul, in proof that He has already chosen her for great things if she will only prepare herself to receive them, and it is a gift much greater than any words of mine could express."

§ 3. Some counsels regarding this prayer.

Both in this portion of her *Life* and in her *Way of Perfection*, Saint Teresa gives various counsels to those whom God is pleased to raise to this Prayer of Quiet. Of these the principal are:—

First, that they should select a good director, by whom they may be guided in all that concerns their spiritual affairs.

Secondly, that they should not be troubled, if the workings of the understanding or imagination should sometimes disturb their prayer.

Thirdly, that when one is in this state of prayer, he should not interrupt the quiet of his soul by reciting many prayers in a hurried manner; but, instead of doing so, should continue to enjoy, with all possible tranquillity, the gift which God sends him, repeating from time to time no more than an occasional word.

Fourthly, that he should endeavour to make solid progress in all the virtues; because by so doing he will receive still greater favours from God, until he shall attain to perfect union with Him, and will perform great things for His glory.

And if any one should desire to understand more perfectly this kingdom of God—that is to say, this precious enjoyment of the sweet Prayer

of Quiet—let him listen to St. Bernard, who says: "Oh, whoever you are that desire to know what is meant by this enjoyment, do not strive to learn it by hearing a description of it, but apply your *heart* to the solution of the question. No tongue can teach what it is: grace alone can impart that knowledge. This is a science which is hidden from the wise and prudent ones of this world, and is revealed to those who are as simple as little children. O my brothers, what a great and sublime virtue is that humility which merits a degree of knowledge incapable of being taught; which deserves to know what is so sublime that it cannot be learned! In the sight of the Eternal Word, it deserves to attract to itself from that same Word what human words fail to express. How does this happen? It is not indeed the result of any merit of ours, for it is not a thing that can be merited. It happens, then, because such is the will of the Father of the Eternal Word, the Spouse of our soul—Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

Of the Third Petition: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

In the Third Petition Saint Teresa considers God as the Spouse of our souls and speaks as

follows in the Meditation which she sets down for Wednesday: "The Third Petition is *Thy will be done*, in which we desire that God's will may be accomplished in all things—nay more, we pray that His will may be accomplished on earth, with the same perfection of love with which it is accomplished in heaven. This Petition follows very appropriately after the two preceding ones; because it is very proper that in all things the will of the Eternal Father should be most perfectly accomplished by His children, and that of our Sovereign King by His subjects. Wherefore, that we may be the more ready to conform ourselves to this divine will, let us represent to our minds this Father and King of kings under the title of the most loving Spouse of our souls Whoever attentively considers this title and understands all the love that it implies, will, without doubt, feel in his heart a burning desire to fulfil the will of that Lord, who, though being the King of kings, the brightness of Paradise, the abyss of all riches, and the ocean of all beauty—most strong, most powerful, most wise, and most loveable—wishes, nevertheless, to be loved by us, and to love us in return with all that tenderness of affection which this most sweet name implies.

§ 1. God the Spouse of the soul.

"His Divine Majesty sets great value on this title, and therefore when inviting to repentance sinful and adulterous Jerusalem, He begs of her to return to Him and to call Him 'Father and

Spouse,' in order thereby to give her confidence and a pledge that she will be received by Him.

"This title of Spouse calls up before our minds everything that is implied in a faithful, generous love—all that is included in a mutual surrender of wills; and therefore, in assuming to Himself this title, God claims our undivided love, our every thought, our entire heart. It was thus that after He had made a contract and covenant of espousals with Israel of old, as we read in Deuteronomy, He required and commanded that they should love Him with their whole heart, with their whole soul, and with all their strength."

In this Petition, then, we must reflect in a special manner upon the condescension of Almighty God, who, not content with wishing to be the Father and the King of the soul that He loves, wishes also to be her Spouse, and seems to value this title above every other.

In truth, His Divine Spirit dictated to Solomon one entire book of Holy Writ—the Canticle of Canticles—which may be considered as a long nuptial ode to celebrate God's espousals with the soul He loves. In this book, under the veil of deep mystic words, is described the most holy and ineffable love which passes between the Eternal Spouse and the soul that He has espoused. This book, so extremely difficult to be understood by worldly and carnal minds, is a paradise of light and sweetness for pure souls; and it is all the more so, in proportion as they have

approached the nearer to the goal of perfect sanctity. Towards the close of his life, Saint Bernard found delight in writing a commentary on this book of God's love, but was unable to finish his labours on it, being called away to enjoy in heaven those transports which he essayed to describe on earth. In his last illness Saint Thomas of Aquin explained this book to the monks of Fossanuova. The last earthly labour of the pious Gerson was likewise expended upon it, and he died three days after finishing his work. Saint John of the Cross would have it read to comfort him in his dying agony, and it is recorded in his *Life* that, on hearing the loving sentences with which it is replete, he wept and exclaimed: *O what precious pearls are these!* Saint Teresa, also, wrote some noble thoughts on the words of this book, but only a few fragments of her work remain.

In this sublime canticle, the Divine Spouse describes, one by one, the beauties of His beloved, and bursts forth into exclamations of wonder and of love, which are calculated to fill us with astonishment: "Behold thou art fair, O my love, behold thou art fair, thy eyes are as those of doves. (Cap. i. v. 14.) Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come. . . . Show me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet and thy face comely. (ii. 13, 14.) Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee. . . . Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded

my heart with one of thy eyes. . . . Thy lips, my spouse, are as a dropping honeycomb, honey and milk are under thy tongue, and the smell of thy garments as the smell of frankincense. My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up. (iv. 7, 9, 11, 12.) Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled. (v. 2.) Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely as Jerusalem. (vi. 3.) How beautiful art thou and how comely, my dearest in delights!" (vii. 6.)

With these and other such wonderful expressions does the Spouse of our souls, the King of heaven, proclaim His love for us; and after such declarations, it is needless to bring forward additional proofs of this love from other portions of Holy Writ.

From various other passages in the same Canticle, which represent the soul speaking with her Heavenly Spouse, we may gather how familiarly and lovingly He permits her to treat Him. Similar outpourings of tender affection and intimacy are even more vividly expressed in the writings of the Saints, who, having had practical experience of these loving transports, endeavour to give us some idea of them, in order to bring before us in the strongest colours the love of our Divine Spouse, and to inflame our souls with a burning desire to be united to Him. It will be particularly useful to read on this point what Saint Teresa has written in her *Life* and in the *Mansions*, as well as what Saint John of the

Cross has left us on the same subject in his *Spiritual Canticle* and in the *Living Flame of Love.* Happy he who can understand all that these have written about God's wondrous love for those souls that love Him much!

§ 2 Duties incumbent on the soul as the spouse of God.

But since the souls that have attained to this high degree of perfection and of loving familiarity with their Heavenly Spouse are few in number, while, on the other hand, there are many souls in the state of grace, and consequently espoused by God, who are imperfect and tepid in His love, let us once again listen to Saint Teresa, and learn from her what rule of conduct these latter are to pursue, in order that they may succeed in pleasing their Heavenly Spouse, and may merit special tokens of His love. Saint Teresa therefore says: "Reflect then how circumspect, how modest, how elegantly attired the spouse ought to be who is loved by such a great king, and how grave she ought to be both in her thoughts and in her conduct.

"Consider the jewels and other ornaments with which this Bridegroom is accustomed to adorn His spouses; and endeavour to prepare your soul to merit them, for assuredly He will not leave it poor, nor naked, nor unadorned. Ask of Him to give you these jewels that are most pleasing to His Divine Majesty. Place yourself at His feet; for sometimes this Lord will deign in His heavenly goodness to raise you up and to receive you into His arms, as King Assuerus did Queen Esther."

The soul, therefore, may look upon herself as being in the same condition as a poor girl of low extraction, who has had the good fortune to be chosen as the bride of a very rich and powerful lord; and she may consider how such a poor girl would be likely to conduct herself, if she were prudent, grateful for the favour conferred upon her, and anxious to secure the affection of her lord. Oh! how anxious and diligent she would be to study his disposition, so as to please him in everything! How careful she would be to hold aloof from all society that might in any way reflect discredit upon her! How anxiously she would endeavour to adorn herself as elegantly as possible, so as to appear less unworthy of him, and to find favour in his sight! How modest she would be in her conduct, so that no one might find anything to censure in her! She would even rid herself of all those low and coarse habits of thought, to which she had been accustomed previous to her espousals.

Well, what this poor maiden, so fortunate in the eyes of the world, would do to please an earthly lover, who, though of high degree, would yet be far from perfect, and would, moreover, be liable to all the infirmities of humanity, including death itself, let the soul that is espoused by God endeavour to do, in order to please that Sovereign Bridegroom, whose beauty and goodness are infinite, whose every quality claims her love, and who will be her Spouse, not for a time, but for all eternity. In all her thoughts, in her every

act, let her study only His pleasure; and let her be diligent in finding out in all things what is His divine will, that she may execute it, no matter how great the inconvenience or the sacrifice. Let her life be retired, and let her affections never rest, even for a moment, upon any earthly person or object, so that she may never bring disgrace upon herself by harbouring in her heart any base or unworthy love. Let her adorn herself with all the Christian virtues practised in the most perfect degree; and let her suffer nothing to exist either in her soul, where her Spouse dwells, or in her exterior deportment, which could possible displease Him, so that thus she may appear before Him all beautiful and without stain.

Let her consider also *the jewels and the ornaments*, that is to say, the graces and special favours *with which this most loving Bridegroom is accustomed to adorn the soul that He has espoused; and let her endeavour to prepare herself to deserve them*, by doing everything in her power to render herself fit for the choicest favours He may wish to bestow upon her, *being fully persuaded that He will not leave her poor, or naked, or unadorned*, since this Divine Spouse is only too anxious to see the soul that He has espoused richly adorned. Let her, therefore, beg of Him to bestow upon her *those jewels that are most pleasing to His Divine Majesty;* for a bride ought not to consult her own tastes in the matter of personal adornment, but rather the

wishes of her Spouse. She ought not to aim at pleasing herself or others, but Him alone.

Wherefore it is fitting that she should ask for those jewels which are indispensable to her in order to retain His love—that is to say, humility, simplicity, purity, and all the other Christian virtues; but as regards *special* and *exceptional* favours which are not necessary, let her leave the matter entirely to Himself, wishing for nothing that may not be pleasing to Him. If she will only place herself at His feet with such dispositions of humble detachment, she will become so pleasing in His divine sight, that He will not fail from time to time *to raise her up from the earth and to receive her into His arms, as King Assuerus did Queen Esther*—that is to say, He will console her with His divine presence, and will raise her up to perfect contemplation. However, we shall speak in another chapter of the manner in which a soul ought to abandon herself into the hands of God, and of the familiarity with which the Lord then treats her.

CHAPTER VII.

The Third Petition continued.

SAINT TERESA goes on to say, that the soul espoused by God ought to consider "the poverty of the dowry which she brings to

this espousal, and the immense riches of the bridegroom; and, furthermore, how by the price of His Blood He purchased from His Father our souls, in order to make them His spouses, from having been previously the slaves of Satan, so that He might justly be called a Spouse of blood. These espousals were made in baptism, wherein He gave us His faith, together with other virtues and gifts which are the ornament of our souls. And as all the gifts of God have become ours by means of this espousal, so, too, this most dear Spouse has made all our labours and trials His own: for such was the exchange He made with us, bestowing upon us all His blessings and taking to Himself all our evils. Must not whoever reflects well upon this feel intense grief at seeing Him offended, and boundless joy at seeing Him faithfully served? Who can behold without pity a Spouse such as this tightly bound to a pillar and scourged? Who can look upon Him nailed to a cross and laid in a sepulchre, without feeling his heart torn with grief? And, on the other hand, who can behold Him triumphantly risen again, without experiencing indescribable joy?"

§ 1 Reflections to be made by the soul as the spouse of God.

But while indulging in these reflections, the soul must at the same time attend particularly to the necessity of *self-knowledge*. In the 13th chapter of her *Life*, Saint Teresa says that "Knowledge of ourselves

§ 2 Self-knowledge.

and of our sins is the bread with which all our meals, however savoury they be, ought to be eaten on this road of prayer; for without this bread they could not nourish us"; and in the 39th chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, she says: "Be careful in the beginning and the end of your prayer, however sublime your contemplation may be, always to conclude with the knowledge of yourselves: For if your contemplation really comes from God, you will do this very often of your own accord, even though it be distasteful, because it brings humility along with it, and leaves us more light to know what a nothing we are". Saint John of the Cross also says: "As a rule, all the graces which God showers down upon the soul, are found contained in this knowledge (of ourselves and of our own wretchedness)" (*The Obscure Night*, book I., chap. 12).

Wherefore, even though the soul should be highly favoured by God, and enriched and adorned by Him even with the most precious gifts, nevertheless it is always necessary that she should reflect upon *the poverty of the dowry which she brings to her espousal.* Her dowry is simply her own nothingness, her own wretchedness and her sins. For, in truth, this is all she has of her own; and there is nothing else belonging to her of which she can say: *This is mine.* All the gifts which she possesses, whether natural or supernatural, come to her from the hand of God; and, as He is the Giver of them, so, too, He alone is the Owner of them. Let

her reflect well, therefore, upon her own nothingness, her own wretchedness, both spiritual and corporal, and, above all, upon the sins which she has committed and still continues to commit; and in this manner let her humble herself to the lowest depths of sincere humility, in the presence of her Divine Spouse.

This virtue of self-knowledge shines forth pre-eminently in holy souls, and confirms them in humility to such a degree, that the greater they become in the eyes of God, the less do they become in their own eyes, until at length they are no longer assailed by any temptations of vain glory. In the 12th chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, Saint Teresa says: "I believe that the devil will never dare to tempt one who is truly humble, even with the very least inclinations to desire superiority over others". Indeed such souls are greatly surprised and amazed, as though something which they had deemed impossible had occurred, when they perceive that any one esteems or honours them. They consider themselves as unworthy even to exist among God's creatures, and they believe that there cannot possibly be any living thing worse than themselves.

We have an example of this in Saint Teresa, who writes of herself as follows: "I fancy that, even though I were to desire it ever so much, I could not yield to vain glory; nor do I see how I could bring myself to imagine that any one of these virtues (which she had just mentioned) is

found in me. For it is not so long since I saw myself devoid of all virtue, and that, too, for many years; and now, on my part, I do nothing else but receive favours from God without making good use of them, so that I must look upon myself as the most useless thing in the world. And so it comes to pass, that I sometimes reflect how every one makes progress in virtue except myself, who am good for nothing. I do not say this from any feeling of humility, but simply because it is the literal truth" (*Second Relation* to her Confessors, n. 17).

Saint John of the Cross has left us the following admirable description of souls endowed with this rare degree of humility: "Influenced by love, they would fain do such great things for God, that even all they are already doing seems to them nothing; and this loving anxiety soon gains such complete mastery over them, that they never consider whether others are doing good or not, or if they ever should happen to bestow a thought upon it, the conclusion at which they arrive is, that all others are better than themselves. Wherefore, entertaining a low opinion of themselves, they would wish others also to hold them in slight esteem, to make no account of them, and to despise what belongs to them. Nay, furthermore, if others should wish to praise and to respect them, they cannot bring themselves to believe it, and it seems to them strange how any one could speak well of them. . .

"They rejoice on hearing others praised; and their only regret on such occasions is, that they do not serve God themselves with the same perfection as their neighbours do. They never like to speak of their own state; because they think so lightly of it that they are ashamed to speak of it even to their confessors, since they think it altogether unworthy of mention. They are much more ready to speak of their faults and imperfections, or of what they consider not to be their virtues. Wherefore, they prefer to treat of their spiritual affairs with those persons who have the least opinion of their state and spirit; and this is a characteristic of a soul that is simple, pure, true, and very pleasing to God. For since the Spirit of the Divine Wisdom dwells in these humble souls, He quickly moves and inclines them to guard secretly their treasures in their hearts, and to expel therefrom the evil. God grants this grace, together with other virtues, to the humble, while, on the contrary, He withholds it from the proud.

"Such souls as these would pour out their hearts' blood for one who serves God, and they help him by every means in their power to persevere in this service. When they fall into imperfections, they bear up under them with humility, in tranquillity of soul, in loving fear of God, and placing their trust in Him". (*The Obscure Night*, book I., chap. 2).

§ 3. Knowledge of the gifts of God.

Nevertheless, the soul that is espoused by God must not constantly occupy herself with the thought of *her poor dowry*—that is to say, of her own nothingness and sinfulness; but from time to time she must think of *the dowry with which her Divine Spouse enriches her*, namely, His grace and all those other virtues which He lavishes so liberally on the souls of those He loves. This is why Saint Teresa says in the 13th chapter of her *Life*, already quoted: "This (bread of self-knowledge) must be taken by weight and measure, by which I mean to say, that when a soul sees herself already humble, and is fully persuaded that she is good for nothing, and is ashamed and confounded to stand in the presence of so great a King, and considers how little she repays Him for all that she owes Him . . . she ought to pass on to other considerations which the Lord will bring before her".

She repeats the same advice at greater length in the *Mansions*, I., where, among othert hings, she says: "Humility always works in the same manner in which the bees make honey in their hive. . . . But let us bear in mind that the bee is continually coming out, and flitting in all directions to gather honey; and so, in like manner, let the soul come out of the consideration of its imperfections, and fly upwards occasionally to contemplate the greatness of her God. . . . If we be always occupied in the consideration of our own wretchedness here

below, we shall never be free from the mire of fears, of faint-heartedness, and cowardice."

Wherefore, after the soul shall have well considered the poverty of *her dowry*, and shall have thereby conceived fitting sentiments of humility and of entire distrust of herself, let her reflect, in like manner, on *the dowry which her Spouse has given her*, in order that this consideration may inspire her with courage and unbounded confidence. Let her consider the priceless value, the greatness, the excellence of this dowry, as estimated by the most Sacred Blood that was shed for her by her Spouse; for her entire dowry consists in the merits of this Blood. "*A bloody Spouse art thou to me*"—*Sponsus sanguinum tu mihi es*—said Sephora to Moses (Exod. iv. 25); and a bloody Spouse is Jesus to the soul He loves; for it was by the shedding of His Blood that He purchased, redeemed, and espoused her, and it is by His Blood, likewise, that He enriches her with all spiritual treasures, fills her with consolation, admits her to the most familiar intercourse with Him, and finally unites her to Himself for ever in glory. We should also note very particularly the exchange which He makes with the soul He loves, taking upon Himself all her burdens and wretchedness (sin alone excepted), and bestowing upon her, in turn, all His blessings. He took for His own share poverty, insults, sufferings, and death, which are the wretched inheritance of our poor humanity, in order to

communicate to the soul riches, dignity, and a life of never-ending happiness, which are the special blessings of God.

§ 4. The love that befits a soul espoused by God.

Meanwhile the soul ought to consider the love which she ought to bear towards this Heavenly Spouse — a strong love, a love prepared for self-sacrifice even to the shedding of blood. Many souls would wish to contract espousals with Jesus, on the condition of bearing Him only a tender, a sweet, and pleasant love. They are frightened and dismayed at the thought of bearing Him that strong love—that self-sacrificing love, which does not shrink even from shedding blood, nay, which will not be satisfied unless it be called upon to prove itself by suffering. And yet this is the love which a soul ought to strive to bear to her Spouse Jesus. When the soul is plunged in an ocean of spiritual delights, it is very easy to love Jesus; indeed we might say it is impossible to do otherwise. Saint Peter showed no repugnance to tarry with Jesus amidst the glories of Thabor; but, on the contrary, without even reflecting on what it was that he said, he projected building there three tabernacles for his Master, for Moses, and for Elias, being quite satisfied to remain unsheltered there himself. But far different were his feelings at a later period in the Pretorium. There, when he saw his Divine Master no longer arrayed in dazzling glory, but covered with confusion; no longer surrounded by the holy prophets, but in

the midst of executioners—derided, ill-treated, on the very point of being led to death—he kept at a distance from Him, and even denied that he knew Him. Now, we may ask, why did Saint Peter act so very differently on these two occasions? It was simply because his love was as yet very weak and imperfect; and therefore he was quite ready to rejoice with Jesus, but most unwilling to face danger and suffering with Him. But after he had received the fullness of love on the Day of Pentecost, he no longer shrank from suffering or from death; but, on the contrary, thirsted for them, until at length he received the martyr's crown.

O ye souls whom Jesus has espoused! be not deceived, by expecting from the love of this Spouse the enjoyment even in this life of ineffable delights. It is true that, from time to time, He will embrace you and draw you sweetly to His heart; it is true that He will sometimes give you a foretaste of those eternal delights which it is in His power to bestow; but, nevertheless, that is not the time in which He will give you the greatest proofs of His love, nor in which you will prove your love for Him in return. The time when He will give you special proofs of love, is the very time when He will appear to be holding aloof from you, abandoning you to darkness and bitterness of heart; when He will demand of you the sacrifice of everything you hold most dear, were it even your very life. And if you, in such circum-

stances, remain faithful to him, and show yourselves ready and anxious to endure every trial of soul and body in conformity with His will, you will thereby give Him that proof of love which He prizes most.

Ye souls whom Jesus has espoused! do not at present long so much for the joys and delights of His love. Remember that you have all eternity before you, in which to rejoice with Him; and surely an eternity of enjoyment ought to suffice, even for those who covet enjoyment most eagerly. But, on the other hand, you have only the few brief moments of this present life in which to suffer with Jesus, and thereby to prove the love you bear Him. If you be wise, then, your sole desire at present ought to be *to suffer* with your Divine Spouse, reflecting that the happiness of suffering with Him, and for love of Him, must terminate at the hour of death, and can be nevermore enjoyed. How condescending to your weakness is this Divine Spouse! You have both to suffer and to rejoice with Him; but He limits the period of suffering to a few brief moments, while the enjoyment is destined to last throughout endless ages! Your earnest desire, then, ought to be, that of the brief term of this life no moment should pass without suffering, just as no moment of eternity will be without its enjoyment.

But if you should still desire, even in this world, some foretaste of that enjoyment which awaits you in heaven, Saint Teresa will not for-

bid you to entertain such a desire. She herself once asked the Lord to grant her some spiritual delights, and she says, "I knew well that it was lawful to ask for them" (*Life*, chap. 9). However, you ought to ask for such spiritual favours, only that they may encourage and strengthen you to suffer all the more courageously. In this respect they are suitable and desirable, and for this purpose the Heavenly Bridegroom gives them to His spouses, and a the more abundantly in proportion as the desire to suffer through love of Him. Sometimes He floods their souls with such ineffable sweetness and delights, that the human heart could not contain them, were it not enlarged by God for the purpose. But, as Saint Teresa points out in the 18th chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, these unspeakable delights are bestowed upon the soul, in order to prepare her for great and terrible sufferings that are in store for her. "I regard it as certain," she says, "that God sends them much greater troubles. And as He conducts them through such a rough and uneven way, that sometimes they seem to themselves on the point of being lost . . . it is necessary that His Majesty should give them some refreshment—not water, but wine—so that, being inebriated with this heavenly wine, they may not heed what they are suffering, and may be able to endure it." Wherefore one should not desire even spiritual delights merely

§ 5. How far the soul that is espoused by God may desire spiritual delights.

for the sake of enjoying them; for the present is not the time for such enjoyment. If you wish to enjoy them, let it be in order that you may the better know how to suffer, and be the better able to endure suffering for your Divine Spouse.

§ 6. Conclusion of the Meditation.

At this point, Saint Teresa concludes the Meditation as follows: "Here it will be proper to consider Jesus in the Garden, prostrate before His Eternal Father, sweating blood, and offering Himself to Him with the most perfect resignation, while He says, '*Not My will but Thine be done*'". In this scene the soul beholds her Divine Spouse accepting, taking upon Himself, and, as it were, embracing in His heart the blows, the scourgings, the thorns, the cross, the nails, and the most terrible of all deaths, through love of her; and she sees that He takes all this upon Himself willingly, though His Humanity recoils from the pain of it, even to the degree of agony, and of causing His body to sweat drops of blood.

This consideration will prove more useful than any other while meditating on this Petition; not only because it embraces all the torments of the Passion which Jesus at that moment felt so keenly in His soul, but more especially because it was then that He reduced to practice that prayer which He taught us in the Petition—*Thy will be done*,—by conforming Himself so perfectly to the will of His Divine Father, while His soul was plunged in such a

sea of troubles. However, we shall return later on to speak of this conformity to the divine will.

We may remark, in passing, that Saint Teresa had a special devotion to this stage of our Lord's Passion, as she tells us herself in the 9th chapter of her *Life*, where she says: "During many years, almost every night before I went to sleep, I always meditated for a little while on the Prayer in the Garden, even before I became a nun . . and I believe that my soul derived much benefit from this practice".

CHAPTER VIII.

The Third Petition continued.

§ 1. The Soul's offering to her Divine Spouse.

In the 32nd chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, Saint Teresa speaks as follows of the conformity of will which ought to exist between the soul and her Divine Spouse: "Since our good Master has asked for us, and has taught ourselves to ask for a favour of such value (*i.e.*, God's kingdom), which comprises in itself everything that can be desired; and since He has conferred upon us the great favour of making us His brothers, let us now consider what it is He wishes us to give His Father, and what it is that He offers to Him for us, and what he asks of us in return. For it

is right that we should make Him some return for the very great favours He has conferred upon us."

Here the Saint tells us, that since the Divine Master has asked for us the supreme blessing of inheriting God's kingdom, since He has taught us to make the same request in our own behalf, and since He has ennobled us by making us children of His Heavenly Father, it is but right that we should study to discover what it is that He wishes to receive from us in return, in order that we may promptly give it to Him, and thus prove our gratitude for so many manifestations of His love. Then, addressing her beloved Lord, she continues thus: "O good Jesus! if You give so little (little, I mean, on our part), how can You ask so much for us? Although what we offer is a mere nothing in comparison with what we owe to so great a Lord, yet certainly, my Lord, You leave us absolutely nothing, and we give You all that we possibly can, if we give You what our words imply when we say, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*

"Thou hast done well, our good Master, in asking what Thou didst in the preceding Petition (namely, the advent of God's kingdom), in order that we may be able to accomplish that which You offer up to God in our behalf in this one. Were it not so, O Lord, I would certainly regard the matter as impossible. But because Your Father performs what You ask of Him—that is, to give us here below His kingdom—I

know that we shall also find You faithful in giving Him what You offer for us (*i.e.*, that we should accomplish His will on earth, as the Blessed do in heaven); for once earth has become heaven, it will be possible to accomplish Your will in me, but without this, in a soil so poor and barren as is my soul, I know not, Lord, how it could possibly be effected."

Here the Saint remarks, that although it is a mere nothing to surrender our will to God in exchange for all that He gives to us, nevertheless, considered from our point of view, it is a great deal, and, in fact, everything, since nothing else afterwards remains to us. Because the man who yields up his will to God without reserve, no longer retains, nor can he retain, anything for himself. He cannot reserve to himself honours, or property, or pleasures, or health, or life, since he has placed everything unconditionally in the hands of God, in order that He may dispose of all absolutely as it may please Him.

§ 2. How the offering of one's will is to be made.

The oblation of her own will to God implies that the soul should absolutely surrender herself and everything belonging to her into the hands of her Divine Spouse; and this surrender is the beginning and the goal of all that perfection to which she ought to aspire, in order to give entire satisfaction to her Beloved.

It is the beginning of perfection; because, as long as the soul does not resolve to abandon herself entirely into the hands of God, as long

as she willingly reserves to herself the disposal of anything that concerns her, desiring, for example, one state of life or one occupation more than another, as long as she is not indifferent to all human affairs and to seeking anxiously for one thing rather than another, whether in the temporal or the spiritual order—as long, I say, as the soul remains in this state, it cannot be said of her that she is fully disposed for the attainment of perfection.

Wherefore, the moment a soul hears the first knockings of divine love, intimating to her that her Heavenly Spouse wishes to take full possession of her heart, let her immediately beseech Him not to delay—"*He that heareth let him say: Come . . . Lord Jesus*" (Apoc. xxii. 16-20)—and let her make an entire offering to Him of herself and of everything that belongs to her, reserving absolutely nothing for herself.

This oblation of one's own will is likewise the goal of all perfection; because, as a rule, that first offering of our will, and the very many other such that are made subsequently, are not so perfect in reality as they would seem to be in words. The soul says: *I give to Thee without reserve myself, and all that belongs to me;* and yet, without perceiving it, she still preserves in her heart various attachments, which manifest themselves on several occasions. Wherefore, it is necessary that she should be ever on the watch to purify herself from such attachments, until by degrees she becomes always more per-

fect in His sight, and finally abandons herself in all truth and sincerity into God's hands. Then it is that the soul will reach the goal of the highest perfection that is attainable in this world.

Wherefore, let every soul that is really anxious to please God, renew frequently, with great humility and love, the oblation of herself to her Divine Spouse, and let her not weary of doing so to the very hour of her death. Happy she! if she shall succeed then—then, at least—in making this oblation with all that perfection which is to be desired.

Let this oblation be an offering of the soul itself with all its powers, of the body with all its feelings, of health and of life, of position and occupation, of property and of honours, of relatives and of friends—in a word, of everything whatsoever that in any way appertains to us, being ready to make any sacrifice which God may require of us, no longer wishing that we ourselves, or whatever may belong to us, should ever serve any other purpose, either in this life or in the next, except to give pleasure to God in whatsoever manner may best please Him.

§ 3. Earth changed into heaven.

Saint Teresa is justly of opinion that in this Petition Jesus asks with us and for us a very high favour, and one that we could not easily hope for, if the request made in the preceding Petition for the advent of God's kingdom had not been already

obtained. Wherefore, she considers it impossible that God's holy will could be done on earth as it is in heaven, unless earth were first in some manner changed into heaven.

In heaven God's will is accomplished with the greatest perfection, because in heaven God reigns supreme, and it is impossible that a will at variance with His could exist there; but on this earth sin holds sway, and, because of sin, there are in this world innumerable wills opposed to the will of God. Every pulsation of the hearts of the blessed in heaven is regulated by the essentially perfect will of God, which of necessity inclines to what is good; while, on the other hand, every movement of earthly hearts of itself proceeds from a carnal will, which is naturally imperfect and inclined to evil.

It is, therefore, necessary, that there be established in our souls the kingdom of God—that is to say, His grace and His love to direct and sanctify our wills, to make our desires heavenly from being earthly, and thus to change this poor earth of our hearts into a heaven abounding in riches. When this takes place, then will God's will be accomplished here below by men, as it is now accomplished in heaven by the blessed.

But should it happen, in addition, that the soul espoused by God should be enriched and ennobled by the gift of contemplation, which is God's blessed kingdom, and the beginning of heaven in this life, then the earth of her heart will be still more easily changed into heaven,

and the will of God will be still more perfectly accomplished therein, as it is in heaven.

§ 4. The grace of suffering is God's will.

It now remains that we consider what, in the opinion of Saint Teresa, is God's will concerning us. It is simply *that we should suffer* in a greater or in a less degree, in proportion to the love we bear Him. Here are her own words:—"The Lord knows what each one is able to endure; and when He sees that one has strength, He does not desist until He accomplishes His will in him (that is to say, He does not cease to send him sufferings). Now I wish to inform and remind you what is His will. Do not think or fear that it is to give you riches, or pleasures, or honours, or any worldly advantages. He does not love you so little as to treat you thus. . . . Do you wish to know how He acts towards those who offer up to Him in sincerity this Petition: *Thy will be done?* Well, ask His blessed Son, who uttered these very words when He prayed in the garden. For since He spoke this Petition with full deliberation, and from His whole heart, see, too, how fully God accomplished it in Him, by sending Him the most terrible troubles, pains, insults, and persecutions, until at length He ended His life by dying upon a cross. You see, then, daughters, what it was He gave to Him that He loved most; and from this fact you may learn what His will is, and of what kind the favours are which He bestows in this world. In dispensing these favours, He regulates every-

thing in proportion to the love He bears us. To those He loves more, He gives them in greater abundance, while He gives them less abundantly to those whom he loves less. Moreover, in sending them, He takes into account the courage He sees in each one, and the love which each one bears to His Divine Majesty. Whoever loves Him much will find that he can suffer much for Him; but He will send few sufferings to the one that loves Him but little. For my part, it is my conviction that *love is the standard* which regulates our ability to bear the cross in a greater or in a less degree."

According to Saint Teresa, then, when we pray that God's will may be accomplished, we ask for the grace to endure sufferings for the love of Jesus; since, as has been already said, it is His will that we should suffer with Him, our Beloved Spouse, during the period of this temporal life, reserving to ourselves to rejoice with Him hereafter for all eternity.

The Saint, however, foresees that some souls, that are rather weak, will not have the courage to pray to God expressly to send them sufferings; for though their spirit be ready for such trials, yet the infirmity of the flesh rebels against them. Wherefore, discreet as she ever is, she does not censure "those who omit to ask for sufferings through humility, because they consider themselves unable to bear them". And, without doubt, he who is filled with a lively sense of his own weakness, must not be blamed if he shrink

from asking God to send him trials and sufferings, even though they are the most precious gifts which He bestows upon His elect in this life. It will be enough for such a one to be ready to receive with resignation from the hand of God, all such trials as He may be pleased to send. It will suffice that such a soul should say to her Divine Spouse: *I see that I am so weak as not to have strength enough to support even the very lightest cross, therefore I fear to ask Thee for trials. Nevertheless, since I am aware that no greater misfortune could befall me, and that no greater punishment could be inflicted upon me by Thee, than to be altogether exempted from suffering, behold me ready to accept and to welcome such trials as Thou mayest be pleased to send me, placing my trust in Thee alone to give me the strength necessary to bear them.* Such sentiments of humility and resignation will be pleasing to the Lord, and He will be satisfied with them.

§ 5. How confidently we may ask for this favour.

However, it might happen that the soul, after having dwelt on the bitter sufferings which her Spouse endured for her, and after having enjoyed some foretaste of heavenly consolations, becoming inebriated with the strong sweet wine of God's love, should find herself filled with a holy strength, and panting with a desire to suffer much for her Beloved, in order thus to give Him convincing evidence of her love.

In such moments of fervour the soul does

not fear to ask for sufferings and trials, because, should God send them to her, she will have sufficient strength to endure them. "I consider it certain," says Saint Teresa, "that to whomsoever God gives the will to ask for such a difficult means of proving his love, to him will He also give the strength to endure whatever trials He may send" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 32). But if, on the other hand, the soul be as yet too weak, and not sufficiently prepared for such a test, then no matter how earnestly she may beg for sufferings, God will not send them, but will defer this favour to a more suitable time. Wherefore Saint Teresa says: "I am forced to smile at those persons who do not dare to beg crosses of our Lord, because, indeed, they think that He must therefore send them immediately" (*Ibid.*); as if He should grant the very letter of our petitions, without attending to the result that might follow the bestowal of His favours.

Our Lord Himself one day said to Saint Gertrude, that when He places His elect in the fire of tribulation in order that they may become heated with His love, He imitates a mother who brings her babe near the fire to warm it. The mother on such occasions holds her hands between the infant and the fire, in order that the heat may be regulated to a proper temperature, and that the infant may be thus warmed without being burned (Pacetti, *School of S. Gertrude*, chap. 3). Wherefore Saint Teresa, speaking

of the terrible trials with which God visits contemplatives, says: "Finally, He does not send more than they can endure, and before sending any He gives them patience" (*Mansions*, VI., chap. 1). Therefore, when a soul asks the Lord to send her sufferings, she need not fear being heard to her disadvantage.

§ 6. Necessity of resignation.

However, whether we do or do not ask God expressly for sufferings, we must still bear well in mind that it is God's will that we should suffer much or little in this life for love of Him; that when we repeat the words *Thy will be done*, we ask at least implicitly the privilege of suffering for Him; and that therefore we ought to be resigned to suffer. Whereupon Saint Teresa makes the very appropriate reflection, that in this matter we ought at least to make a virtue of necessity, by enduring willingly and in a meritorious manner what we must in any case endure without merit, and whether we like it or not. "Consider," she says, "my daughters, that, whether it pleases us or not, this promise must be fulfilled, and God's will has to be accomplished both in heaven and on earth. Take my advice, then, believe me, and make a virtue of necessity" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 32).

Then, since she knew thoroughly the beauty, the justice, and the sanctity of God's will, she addresses herself to Him, and says: "O my Lord, what a great consolation is this to me, that Thou hast not left it in the power of a will

so wicked as mine to accomplish or not to accomplish Thy will! I should, indeed, be in a nice predicament, O Lord, if the accomplishment of Thy will in heaven and on earth depended upon me! I now freely surrender my will into Thy hands, although I do so at a time when the offering is not quite free from self-interest; for I have proved by long experience what a gain it is to place my will in Thine. O my sisters, how much we gain by doing this! O what a grievous loss is ours, when we fail to perform what we promise God in the *Our Father* respecting this offering (of our will) which we make to Him" (*Ibid.*).

In this passage we cannot fail to remark the great joy which the Saint feels, at the thought that God's will *must* be accomplished at all hazards, and that this accomplishment does not in the least depend upon the action of our will. This is the supreme consolation of the saints—that God's will is *ever* being accomplished, and that no perverse will of men or of devils can ever prevent its accomplishment. If it be not accomplished in one way, it is sure to be accomplished in another; and even the most wicked wills actually co-operate in this accomplishment in spite of themselves.

Thus, for example, God wished to raise to the highest dignity and power Joseph, the son of Jacob, and for this purpose availed Himself of the wicked hatred of his jealous brothers, permitting that thev should sell him as a slave to

some merchants who carried him into Egypt, where his extraordinary gifts soon merited for him a most exalted position; and so his brothers, while wickedly opposing the divine will as far as it lay with them to do so, actually co-operated by their very act in securing its accomplishment. Again, the wicked enemies of Jesus Christ caused Him to die upon the cross, in the hope of thereby destroying for ever His name and His glory; but His Father in heaven made use of their very wickedness to exalt Him, and to glorify His name above all other names, as had been already fixed in the eternal decrees of His infinite wisdom. So, in like manner, the devils and all wicked men concur by their acts to purify the elect and increase their glory hereafter, in accordance with the decrees of God's mercy; while they also co-operate to punish the wicked, in accordance with the decrees of His justice. *Qui ordinem non tenent, ordine tenentur*, said Saint Augustine; so that God's will is ever being accomplished!

What a consoling spectacle it will be on the Day of Judgment, to see how exactly the loving, holy, adorable will of God has always been fulfilled to the very letter, even despite all the machinations of His enemies! O truly blessed sight to those who shall themselves have willingly and lovingly performed it; but terrible sight indeed to those others, who shall have accomplished it, or, to speak more correctly, shall have co-operated in its accomplishment, against their will.

CHAPTER IX.

The Third Petition continued.

§ 1. The offering of our will must be irrevocable.

In the 23rd chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, already quoted, Saint Teresa, speaking of the thoroughness with which we ought to surrender our will to God, continues as follows:—"If, then, my sisters, you love God, endeavour that the words which you address to so great a Lord be not words of mere empty compliment, but force yourselves to endure whatever trials His Majesty shall be pleased to send you. For, if you surrender your will in any other manner than this, you will be acting pretty much as though you were to show a jewel to some one, begging of him to accept it, and then suddenly to withdraw your hand and retain the jewel, just as the other person was in the act of putting out his hand to take it. These are jests which we should not practise with One who has already endured so many for us; for, if there were no other reason to forbid it, we should at least refrain from mocking Him so frequently, since it is not seldom that we repeat these words to Him in the *Our Father*. Let us now, then, once for all, give Him the jewel with our whole heart, since we have so often feigned to give it to Him. It is true that He gave it to us in the first instance, only that we might return it to

Him. . . . And yet, sometimes we not only feign to give Him the jewel, but we actually place it in His hand and then take it back again. We suddenly become very liberal, and then, again, so miserly, that in one respect it would have been better if we had been more cautious in giving."

Wherefore, when we make an offering of our will to God, we ought to endeavour to make it *in all sincerity*, and *not merely in words*, which are easily uttered by any one. Consequently, when we see that God's will is about to be accomplished in us, by means of some trial or tribulation, we ought not to shrink from it, but to adhere resolutely to the offering we had made, always begging of the Lord that His will may be accomplished, whatever the cost may be to us. Should we do otherwise, we shall be acting the unseemly farce of offering the jewel to God, and then withdrawing our hand when we see that He really accepts it.

In this matter we have need likewise of constancy, that we may never repent of the offering we have made, and may never attempt to regain possession of the jewel which we have already placed in the hands of God; as would happen if, after having suffered cheerfully for a while, we were afterwards to grow weary of it, to feel a dislike of further trials, and to desire to be relieved and comforted, under the pretext even of being unable to endure any more, as we sometimes, perhaps, persuade ourselves. Once

we have placed in the hands of our Divine Spouse the beautiful pearl of our will, there cannot be any motive or reason for taking it back again. He will take care of the rest, and by His grace will give us strength to bear up against tribulation, at the very moment when it may seem to us that our power of endurance is exhausted. The soul must place herself upon the cross of her Beloved Spouse, earnestly beseeching Him to nail her to it by His holy love and fear, and by sentiments of gratitude towards Him; and she must never stir from that cross, nor look for any relief in her sufferings, until the hour arrives when she shall be taken from it to enjoy Him for ever in glory. Oh! with what unbounded confidence will she not then rise up from the cross, at the invitation of her Beloved Spouse!

§ 2. Advantages of this irrevocable oblation.

"But since," continues Saint Teresa, "all that I have been saying to you in this book, is directed to the object of inducing you to give yourselves up entirely to your Creator, placing our wills in His, and detaching ourselves from creatures; and since you already understand how very important it is to do this, I will say nothing further on the subject. I will, however, mention why our good Master places here those words: *Thy will be done*, &c., since He is one who well knows the great advantage we shall derive from doing this service to His Eternal Father. The reason, then, is, that by accom-

plishing what these words signify, we dispose ourselves to complete our journey towards perfection in a short time, and to succeed in drinking of the living water of that Fountain already mentioned. For, unless we surrender our own will entirely to the Lord, that He may dispose absolutely at His pleasure of ourselves and of all that belongs to us, He will never allow us to drink of this water.

"This is perfect contemplation, about which you asked me to write for you, and in which, as I have already said, we do nothing on our part—we neither labour, nor converse with God, nor do anything else (for it is not necessary), but say: *Thy will be done.* Anything beyond this disturbs the soul and is a hindrance to it. May Thy will, O Lord, be fulfilled in me in whatever manner Thou mayest wish. Shouldst Thou wish it to be fulfilled by sufferings, only grant me strength to bear them, and let them come. Shouldst Thou wish it to be accomplished by sending me persecutions, sickness, disgrace, and poverty—well, here I am! I will not refuse them, my Father, nor ought I to turn my back upon them. For since Thy Son, speaking in the name of us all, offered up to Thee this will of mine also, it is not right that I should fail on my part. But I beg of Thee, meanwhile, this favour—to give me Thy kingdom (since He asked it of Thee for me), in order that I may be able to accomplish Thy will, and then dispose of me as a something entirely Thine,

in whatever way it may please Thy holy will.

"O my sisters, how efficacious is this gift of our wills to God! If it be accompanied by that resolution which ought to accompany it, it can produce no less a result than to induce the Almighty to unite Himself with us, base creatures that we are, and to transform us in Himself by effecting a sweet union between the Creator and the creature. Consider, then, whether or not you are well rewarded, and what a good Master you have, who, knowing by what means the goodwill and love of His Father must be gained, teaches us how and in what manner we have to serve Him. And the more resolute the soul is in this service, and the more she shows by her acts that these are not words of mere empty compliment, the more closely will our Lord draw us to Himself and lift us up above all earthly things, and even above ourselves, in order to prepare us for receiving great favours. For, since He never tires of rewarding this service during the present life, setting such value on it, that when we no longer know what to ask yet He still continues to give, He does not rest satisfied with having made such a soul one with Himself, but, furthermore, He commences to enjoy Himself with her, to discover secrets to her, and to rejoice that she understands what it is she has gained, and knows something of what He has yet in store for her hereafter. By sending her raptures, He causes

her to lose the exterior senses, so that nothing else may occupy her attention; and He begins to treat with her so familiarly, that He not only restores her will to her, but together with it gives her also His own. Because the Lord is pleased, since He treats her with such familiarity, that, as the saying is, they should 'command by turns'; and in this manner, just as she executes whatever He commands, so He on His part performs whatever she asks of Him, and does so in a perfect manner, since He is powerful, and can do whatsoever He wills, and never ceases to will it."

As we have already remarked in the 7th chapter, it is not true that the Heavenly Spouse abandons to perpetual, unmitigated suffering the soul that He has espoused; although she, on her part, ought to be ready to endure such through love of Him. And, indeed, we have already seen above that the soul not only ought to be prepared for this, but ought, moreover, positively to make a most perfect and irrevocable oblation, of herself, whereby she would profess herself satisfied to meet with nothing henceforward upon earth except unalloyed and constant suffering. Now, when she has made this oblation and it has been accepted by her Heavenly Spouse, is it really possible that He will actually abandon her to a life of pure, unalloyed suffering, without any passing comfort or consolation? This unmixed suffering was always desired by the saints; and yet it would not be easy to find

any saint whose desire in this respect was entirely gratified. Saint Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, who had made a compact with her Divine Spouse regarding this desire, had sometimes to complain to Him, because He broke the agreement by flooding her soul with spiritual delights. "Ah! my God," she used to say, "why do You break the bargain which You made with me, since I have refused all consolation through love of You" (*Life*, chap. 130).

It is true, as we have already remarked, that the time for rejoicing with Christ is not during this fleeting life, but in eternity, which endures for ever. Nevertheless, this Divine Spouse has a heart so tender, that He cannot entirely deprive the soul He has espoused of the manifestations of His love, even during the brief period of this mortal life. On the contrary, the more eagerly she offers herself to endure unalloyed suffering for love of Him, the more abundantly does He pour into her bosom those chaste and unspeakable delights which have in them no admixture of sadness, and are a beginning of eternal glory. Wherefore we see that Saint Teresa bids a soul that is so disposed to hope for the indescribable joys of perfect contemplation, and warns her that by no other means can she succeed in quenching her thirst at the waters of this heavenly fountain. Then it is that the soul is united with, and transformed in her Divine Spouse, and is prepared to receive great graces. Thenceforward it may be said that no heavenly

secret is any longer kept concealed from the soul, that there is no joy in which she does not participate, and no height of heavenly happiness to which she is not lifted up by force of the Spirit of her Spouse.

Saint Teresa admirably describes the loving familiarity with which God treats the soul in that intimate union. While she, on her part, no longer knows how to do anything except what her Beloved wishes, and while she strives to gratify Him in every particular, He in turn does precisely whatever she desires, since, as Saint John of the Cross says, when the soul has reached a certain degree of love, *she obtains from God whatever she asks of Him with earnestness.* And our Lord once said to Saint Gertrude: "I am bound to gratify the desires of a soul that co-operates with Me, and accommodates herself to My will in all things" (Pacetti, p. 2, c. 1). In this way an interchange of wills takes place between God and man, and each in turn commands, to the mutual satisfaction of both. It was in this sense that Blessed John Colombini wrote: "God will give to many persons, especially to those souls who wish to reach the heights of contemplation, the grace to pray to our Lord with a most ardent love, when the soul being in the arms of her Spouse and united to Him, He neither can nor will refuse her anything; and in such circumstances what can she do, inebriated as she is with love, but call upon Him and, as it were, *compel* Him to promote

His own honour and the salvation of the entire world? Wherefore the enemies of souls employ every device to withdraw them by some means or other from this union, so that they may not force Christ to succour a cold and frozen world" *(Letter X. to the Nuns of St. Ab.).* We see, then, that the blessings are inexpressably great, which Saint Teresa would bid us hope for if we succeed in making a perfect, irrevocable offering of our wills to God.

§ 3. Benefits resulting from union with God.

Let us now consider the benefits resulting from union with God. When the soul has attained this happy state of union with God, what is it that she would not do to prove her love for Him? "But," continues Saint Teresa, "the poor soul, meanwhile, cannot do all that she would desire, no matter how earnestly she may wish it, nor, indeed, can she do anything except she be permitted; and yet, this is her greatest riches—to become the more indebted to Him the more she serves Him, and frequently to be distressed at seeing herself exposed to all the inconveniences, obstacles, and bonds that are inseparable from her state of imprisonment in the body, because she would wish to discharge some little portion of her debt. But she is very foolish in being so much troubled: for though she may do all in her power, yet, as I have already said, what can we poor creatures pay, who have nothing to give unless it first be given to us? All that we can do is to humble ourselves, to realise to our-

selves that we are nothing, and by God's aid to surrender our will perfectly into His hands. All beyond this is a hindrance to a soul which our Lord has brought thus far on the road of perfection: it does her harm, and no good.

"Observe that I am now speaking of a soul which our Lord has been pleased to join to Himself by union and perfect contemplation; for in this state humility is the only thing which can produce any good effect; and this is not acquired by means of any process of reasoning, but by intuitively realising an evident truth, whereby the soul understands in a moment, what the imagination, though it should labour ever so much, could not reach in a long time—namely, that we are a *very nothing*, and that God is *absolutely everything*.

"I would caution you not to fancy that you will be able to reach this point by your own strength and endeavours, for you would only be labouring in vain; nay, even if you were devout before, you will remain cold. You must only repeat, with humility—which is the means by which we obtain everything—*Thy will be done*."

The soul seeing herself thus inundated by the immense favours showered upon her by her Heavenly Spouse, would wish, indeed, to make Him some slight return by tokens of gratitude for so much love, and she really does as much as she can in this direction. But the poor soul becomes disheartened, on seeing that she can do nothing except with the aid of fresh graces and

favours, because we can give nothing to God that we have not first received from Him; and, consequently, she is forced to recognise the painful fact, that the more she tries to pay the more she becomes indebted to Him. Therefore she can do nothing but *humble herself, and recognise herself as a very nothing;* yet, at the same time, she rejoices on seeing how this poverty and impotence on her part, serve to glorify all the more the omnipotence and the riches of her Divine Spouse.

However, this humility with which she is filled is not the result of any process of reasoning, but springs from an intuitive knowledge of the truth that a creature is a very nothing, whereby she realises in a moment what she never could understand by any efforts of thought. Then the soul sees her own *absolute nothingness* so clearly, that even though she were to desire it, she could not possibly deceive herself on the subject; just as one who stands in the light of an unclouded sun cannot be deceived regarding the colour of his clothes, so that if he be dressed in white, he cannot possibly, even though he wished it, suppose that he is dressed in black. While the soul is made thus conscious of her own nothingness, she at the same time realises that God is *everything*, and it is by the light of contemplation that she learns both these truths.

Then it is that the soul is astonished to find that people think highly of her, and she adopts every means in her power to banish this per-

suasion from their minds. On perceiving, however, that she does not succeed in this, but that, on the contrary, people entertain a still higher opinion of her because of that humility which she unconsciously exhibits, she is perplexed as by some mystery which she cannot understand; just as one might be amazed who, while dressed entirely in black, should hear himself complimented on the beauty of his white clothes.

But we may ask on which side does the error lie? Is it the holy soul that is deceived, or those, rather, who are filled with admiration of her? It is neither. It is not the holy soul; because by the aid of God's light illuminating her, she clearly sees her real condition apart from those favours which she has received from God, and which are not really hers. Nor, on the other hand, are those who admire her deceived; for they admire her such as they see her, enriched with those great favours which God has heaped upon her and made her own. Meanwhile, by means of that heavenly light with which she is flooded, she can see nothing great or worthy of esteem except God, and she wonders how any one can possibly esteem anything else but God. O, blessed light! of which that light of glory by which God is seen in heaven, and all things else in God, is but a degree. But, as Saint Teresa reminds us, we cannot reach this light by any efforts of our own; because it is a gift which God bestows on whomsoever He pleases, and the soul can do no

more than dispose herself to receive it, by removing every obstacle on the part of her own will. Wherefore let us content ourselves with saying with simplicity and humility: *Fiat voluntas tua.*

There is a statement of Saint John of the Cross regarding the degree of union with God to which a soul may attain, which well merits our attention. According to his teaching (*Ascent of Mt. Carmel*, bk. II., chap. 5), the soul that shall have its will in perfect conformity and harmony with the will of God, becomes perfectly united to God, and supernaturally transformed in Him by love. He remarks, however, that as the blessed in heaven all see God clearly, but some more perfectly than others according to each one's capacity, though all are satisfied, since each one is filled with the vision according to his merits, greater or less—so, too, upon this earth all souls have not the same capacity to reach the different degrees of purity and love, and therefore that degree which would be sufficient to enable one soul to reach the state of perfect union with God, would not be sufficient for another soul endowed with a greater capacity. Therefore every soul that aspires to this perfect union with God must be filled to the utmost extent of its capacity with the love of God, and with nothing but the love of God.

We will conclude this chapter, which is already rather too long, with another statement,

put forward by Saint Catharine of Siena, regarding the manner in which a soul that enjoys contemplation, having reached the state of union, sees all things in God, even during the present life. "The soul," she says, "that is already conscious of her own nothingness, and knows that all her happiness is in her Creator, becomes entirely detached from herself and from all creatures, and is so completely immersed in her Creator, that she directs all her operations principally and entirely towards Him. On no account does she wish to separate from Him, in whom she perceives that she has found every good and the perfection of all happiness; nor will she, on any account, dissolve the union of love that subsists between them, which daily grows stronger within her, and which, in a certain manner, so transforms her in God, that she cannot think of, or understand, or love anything but God: she cannot recollect anything but God: she cannot see herself or other creatures except in God, and she cannot remember herself or them except in God. The soul in this state exactly resembles one who, being completely submerged in the sea, and swimming under its waters, sees and touches nothing except the waters and such things as they contain, but sees nothing and touches nothing outside of them. And if objects outside the water should happen to be reflected in it, he can see them, it is true, but only as they are reflected in the water, and not otherwise. Such is the

well-ordered and proper relation which we ought to maintain towards ourselves, and towards all creatures; and by observing it we shall never err, because our conduct will thereby be necessarily regulated by God's rules, and, as long as we observe it, we shall never desire anything outside of God, since the soul thus always lives in God, and performs all her operations in Him" (*Life*, p. 1, chap. 10)

CHAPTER X.

On the Fourth Petition: Give us this day our daily bread.

§ 1. God the Shepherd of souls.

EXPLAINING this Petition in the Meditation set down for Thursday, Saint Teresa considers God as the Shepherd of our souls, and says: "Since it agrees very well with a Father, a King, and a Spouse to be also a Shepherd, we, who are His children, subjects and spouses, can ask Him by natural right to support and feed us with such food as may be pleasing to His Majesty, and suitable to our rank as His children. And therefore we do not ask Him to *lend* us, but to *give* us this bread, which, moreover, we call not the bread of others, but *our own;* for if we are His children, the goods of our Father are our goods also."

We may here reflect that, after the title of Spouse, this other title of Shepherd of our souls, which Almighty God is pleased to give Himself, implies great tenderness and love. This title is given to our most loving Saviour in many passages of Holy Writ, but it will suffice to quote one (John xi. 14), in which He Himself says: *Ego sum Pastor bonus—I am the good Shepherd.* In explaining this Fourth Petition, we shall see how He is indeed the Good Shepherd, when we consider the pastures to which He leads those souls He loves, and the anxiety with which He is filled regarding them.

And here we may remark what a holy pride ought to fill the children of so great a Father, the subjects of such a powerful King, and the spouses of such a noble Bridegroom; and, consequently, when we have to ask for food to sustain us, we ought to ask for such as may be worthy of our dignity and exalted rank. This is a holy pride, which does not offend, but honours Him who has to maintain us; for it is not based on any merits of our own—since we are nothing—but upon His exceeding greatness. As long as Esther was nothing more than the poor niece of Mardochai, she had to be content with the common food of the other captive Hebrew maidens; but when she was raised to the throne, and had become the spouse of the great King Assuerus, she would have considered herself wanting in respect to her royal spouse if she suffered the former common food to be

served up before her, instead of the rich and dainty dishes that were usually supplied at the court.

§ 2. Nature of the bread which we ask from the Good Shepherd.

Wherefore Saint Teresa cannot persuade herself that in this Petition we ask for any bread inferior to spiritual and heavenly bread. Here are her words: "I cannot persuade myself that in this Petition we ask for some earthly food to sustain our corporal life, but rather for the spiritual nourishment of our souls. Because of the seven Petitions which we make in this prayer, the three first—namely, the sanctifying of His name, the coming of His kingdom, and the fulfilment of His will—appertain to God. Of the other four which we make in our own behalf this is the first, and it is the only one in which we ask Him to give us something; for in the remaining ones we ask for the pardon of our sins, deliverance from temptations and from all evil. Therefore this one only thing which we ask our Heavenly Father to give us cannot be anything temporal for the body—the more so, since it is not becoming that the children of such a Father should ask for such vile and common things as He is accustomed to give to the inferior creatures and to men without their asking for them. This becomes the more evident, since His Majesty has exhorted us to seek first in our prayers the things that appertain to His kingdom—that is to say, what relates to our souls—promising, at the same time, that He

will Himself make provision for everything else. This He has declared to us through Saint Matthew, in whose Gospel He teaches us to ask for this same bread: *Give us this day our supersubstantial bread.* In this Petition, therefore, we beg for the bread of evangelical doctrine, for virtues, and for the most Holy Sacrament, and, in a word, for everything that supports and strengthens our souls for the preservation of the spiritual life."

We must remark that in the foregoing passage the Saint is writing for *contemplative souls, and for those that are already devoted to God*, as she says in the 37th chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, and as we shall see at the end of this treatise. Indeed, in the chapter just quoted she expressly approves that those who have not yet been raised to the heights of contemplation should ask in this Petition for earthly food likewise, *wherewith to sustain life.*

Speaking, then, of contemplative souls, and of those others who, though they have not yet reached this degree, endeavour, nevertheless, to detach all their affections from this world and wish for God alone, it is very suitable that they should not beg from their Heavenly Father the food of this earth, but only heavenly food, allowing God Himself to provide the food of our bodies, and to give it to us, according to His promise, *in addition* to that heavenly food which we ask of Him. This fact of not lowering ourselves any longer to beg for things of this earth,

will be of great assistance to detach us from them more perfectly, and to preserve us from all ill-regulated anxiety which may take possession of us, because of the need of such things which we must experience as long as we live in this miserable world.

§ 3. Qualities of the Good Shepherd.

Saint Teresa next proceeds to lay before us the qualities of this Heavenly Shepherd, and writes as follows: "Let us, then, consider this Heavenly Father, King, and Spouse as a Shepherd, with the qualities of other shepherds, but with that special characteristic in addition which He Himself mentions in His Gospel when he says: '*I am the Good Shepherd, and I lay down My life for My sheep*,' and thus we shall see how pre-eminently are found in Christ the qualities of those excellent shepherds mentioned in Holy Writ—David and Jacob. Of David it is written that when he was a young man he fought with bears and lions, and tore them to pieces to defend even a single lamb from them. Of Jacob it is written that his sheep or the goats which he tended were never barren; that he never ate a wedder or a kid of his flock, and that he never failed to pay his master the value of any animal which either the wolf devoured or the thief stole, enduring heat and cold and toil by day, and keeping watch during the night, in order to guard securely the flock of his master, Laban.

"From this it will be easy to draw various

reflections, and to apply these qualities to the Divine Shepherd of our souls, who at such great cost slew the infernal lion, in order to rescue the prey from his jaws. When did barrenness ever affect one of those sheep which He guards so carefully? When did He ever spare any labour on His part who laid down His very life for them? Those of them that the infernal wolf had devoured He paid for with his own blood. He never seeks from them any advantage for Himself; but, on the contrary, not only does whatever they acquire belong to themselves, but, furthermore, He bestows upon them not alone what He receives from them, but all His own goods in addition. So fond is He of His sheep that for one of them that died He clothed Himself in its skin, that he might not frighten the others by appearing in the splendour of His Majesty. Who can sufficiently praise the pastures of heavenly doctrine with which He feeds them, the power of the virtues with which He strengthens them, the efficacy of the sacraments with which He nourishes them? If any sheep should stray away into forbidden pastures, He endeavours to bring it back by the sweet summons of His holy inspirations, and if gentle measures should prove insufficient to effect this, He strikes it with the staff of some affliction, in such manner, however, as to frighten without wounding or killing it. He maintains in vigorous health those that are strong, and makes them move forward. He patiently waits for the

weak, He heals those that are sick, and He carries on His shoulders those that are unable to walk, supporting their weakness. When they rest, chewing the food they have taken—that is, meditating on the evangelical doctrine they have learnt—He watches over them, and seating Himself in their midst, He pours harmonious music into their souls by the sweetness of His heavenly consolations, just as a shepherd plays upon his pipe for his flock. In winter He seeks out sheltered and warm places for them, where they may rest after their labours. He is ever watchful to preserve them from poisonous herbs, being careful not to allow them to run in dangerous pastures, but leading them safely through the woods and meadows of His counsels. And though He sometimes conducts them along dusty and stormy roads, and at other times over rocks and precipices, yet when there is question of slaking their thirst, He always leads them to the purest and sweetest water, whereby He gives us to understand that doctrine (which is signified by the water) ought to be always clear and true."

In this somewhat minute description of the Good Shepherd, Saint Teresa gives us to understand how fondly He loves His sheep, and how anxious He is for their welfare. Nor is this anxiety and love the less because He sometimes leads those dear ones along "*dusty and stormy roads, and at other times over rocks and precipices*". Those that He conducts by such

paths are the ones that He loves best, the ones that feed in His sweetest pastures, the ones with whom He loves most to tarry, and which are cheered most by His exceedingly delicious music, which is reserved for a few only. They are contemplative souls, who, borne along by the force of the Divine Spirit, travel over paths that are unknown to the world, that are dangerous to human weakness, but which, nevertheless, are always perfectly secure for those who are conducted there and guided by the Good Shepherd. These paths, in addition to being very secure, are the shortest by which we may reach the heights of Christian perfection. Wherefore the Saint elsewhere calls these extraordinary ways by the name of *short-cut*, because they shorten the road very much (*Mansions*, V., chap. 3); and it is for this reason that the Divine Shepherd leads these souls by such paths, prompted by the special love and anxiety with which He regards them.

§ 4. The Good Shepherd become a lamb.

Continuing her meditation on the Heavenly Shepherd of our souls, Saint Teresa remarks how He was pleased also to become a lamb for our sake. "Saint John," she says, "saw this Divine Shepherd as a lamb in the midst of His sheep, governing them, and guiding them through green and pleasant pastures, as He led them to the fountains of the water of life. Oh! how sweet it is to see the shepherd become a lamb! He is a shepherd, because He feeds

us; and a lamb, because He is our food. He is a shepherd, because He supports His sheep; and a lamb, because He is Himself the support supplied to them. He is a shepherd, because He nourishes His sheep; and a lamb, by being born of them. When, therefore, we ask Him to give us our daily or supersubstantial bread, it is the same as to beg that our Shepherd would Himself become our food and our nourishment.

"It sometimes gives me pleasure to picture Him to myself, as He once represented Himself to a servant of His, in the dress of a shepherd, with a very beautiful face, leaning upon a cross as on His shepherd's staff, calling some of His sheep, and whistling to others. But it is much more sweet to picture Him to one's self, and to look upon Him nailed to that same cross, as a lamb that is prepared for our food, to give us joy and delight. It is sweet to see Him represented as a lamb, bearing the cross upon His shoulders; and, again, to behold Him as a shepherd, carrying upon these same shoulders the lost sheep. As a shepherd, He protects us and shelters us within His heart, affording us an entrance by the portals of His wounds; and, again, as a lamb, He hides and shuts Himself up within us. Consider how well cared, and how safe those sheep are which are near the shepherd; and let us therefore endeavour not to stray away from our Shepherd, or to lose sight of Him; for the sheep that keep close by their shepherd are invariably more caressed and

petted, and he always gives them some choice bit of what he eats himself. Should the shepherd happen to hide himself, or to fall asleep, let not the sheep stir from the spot until she either catches sight of him again, or wakes him by continued bleating, when he will caress her with new favours.

"Let the soul look upon herself as placed in a desert, where, having lost her way, she finds herself in the midst of the darkness and gloom, surrounded by wolves, lions, and bears, without any hope of assistance from earth or heaven, and having no one, except this shepherd alone, to guide and defend her. It is thus that we often find ourselves in darkness here below, surrounded by ambition, by self-love, and by very many other enemies, visible and invisible, against whom we have no other remedy or means of escape, except to invoke the Divine Shepherd, who alone can rescue us from such perils."

In this passage, also, Saint Teresa has expressed herself very fully, so that her views require no further development. However, we should particularly remark the touching picture which she brings before us, of the shepherd becoming a lamb in order to be our food, and this picture we should have always present to our mind when we approach the Holy Eucharist. At that very moment the Church revives our Faith with these sweet words: *Behold the Lamb of God—Ecce Agnus Dei!* O Lamb, most fair,

most innocent, most gentle, most loving! O Lamb, most noble, most just, most divine! *Quis det de carnibus ejus, ut saturemur* (*Office of the Blessed Sac.*, from Job xxxi. v. 31).

Let us also take extreme care *not to stray away from our Shepherd, or to lose sight of Him;* and, therefore, let us keep near Him in the most Holy Sacrament, remaining as much as possible before the Tabernacle, where He stays night and day, in order to be always in the midst of His lambs. But if at any time our duties should prevent us from doing this, let us at least hold Him in remembrance, and keep the eyes of our soul fixed upon Him by a lively faith; and, if we do so, there is no doubt that we shall always receive from Him some special token of affection. It usually happens that, when the Lord begins to caress those souls that abandon themselves entirely to His love, He gives them the first taste of spiritual enjoyment by means of the most Holy Sacrament, sometimes even manifesting His presence to them by supernatural means. The most Holy Sacrament is the loadstone of all hearts that love God, since it draws them all, without exception, to itself; and we may safely affirm that those hearts which are not attracted by it do not really love God, however they may appear to do so, just as we should be safe in stating that, appearances notwithstanding, a needle was not really made of steel if the magnet failed to attract it.

We must bear in mind, likewise, that if, through a special manifestation of love, which usually proves very painful to inexperienced souls, the Good Shepherd should seem to hide Himself, or to fall asleep—that is to say, should deprive the soul of the sweets of His sensible presence, and should appear deaf to her prayers—the soul must not on this account be disturbed or lose courage. Let her still continue to keep close by her Shepherd—that is to say, let her persevere in devotion to the most Holy Sacrament, as if nothing had occurred—and, sooner or later, He will make known to her that she has caused Him to awaken by her loving and trustful words, and He will reward her perseverance with new and most delightful favours.

CHAPTER XI.

The Fourth Petition continued.

§ 1. Excellence of the Blessed Sacrament.

SAINT TERESA says that in this Petition "we must meditate on the mystery of the most Holy Sacrament, and on the excellence of this food, which is the very substance of the Father, and concerning which the holy King David, extolling this favour conferred by God on men, says that the Lord fills us with the very marrow of God.

"This is a greater miracle than God becoming

man; for, in the Incarnation, He deified only His own soul and His most holy body by uniting them to His Divine Person; but, in this Sacrament, God is pleased to deify all men, who are nourished best by the food which they took as children. And since we were regenerated in Baptism by God Himself, He was pleased to become Himself our nourishment, this being more in conformity with the dignity which He conferred upon us of being His children.

"We must reflect upon the love with which this gift is bestowed upon us, since He commands all, under pain of death, to eat of it; and though His Majesty well knew that many would receive it in mortal sin, nevertheless, the love He bears us is so strong and efficacious that, for the sake of enjoying the love with which His friends receive Him, He patiently endures the many affronts offered to Him by His enemies. Wherefore, to make this love the more manifest to us, He was pleased to consecrate and institute this divine food precisely at the very time when He was about to die for us. And though His flesh and blood are really present under either species, He wished, nevertheless, that each should be consecrated separately, in order to show us by this separation and division that, were it necessary, He would die for men as often as the act of consecration is repeated—that is, as often as Mass is daily offered up in the holy Catholic Church.

"The love with which He gives Himself to

us, and the artifice which this divine love has employed in this mystery are really ineffable, for since it is true that no two things can be united without a medium of union, what is it that God's love has done to enable Him to effect a union with man? He assumed our human flesh, uniting it to Himself in the Person of God, and after it has been thus deified, He gives it back to us again as our food, in order thus to unite us to Himself by means of ourselves.

"This is the love which our Lord asks us to reflect upon when we approach the Holy Communion: to this love all our thoughts ought to be directed: this love He wishes that we should keep always before our eyes; and He requires, in proof of our gratitude, that at the time of communion we should remember that He died for us. And that we may clearly see how willingly and how eagerly He gives Himself to us, He calls this food *our daily bread*, and wishes that we should ask it of Him every day."

In this passage, Saint Teresa gives us in a few sentences a most exalted idea of the Blessed Sacrament, which is the true bread of our souls,—a bread so noble, so precious, so divine, that imagination utterly fails to realise how it was possible that God's goodness should have condescended to nourish us with it. But, then, on the other hand, God's works are worthy of God; and this reflection ought to remove that sense of astonishment which His works produce in our mind. What wonder, then, if we discover in

this gift of God to us something infinite, incomprehensible, and we may even say, incredible, as far as our limited understanding is concerned? In truth, in the institution of the most Holy Sacrament, God has acted as only God could act.

We may truly assert that in this Sacrament God has exhausted the treasury of His infinite riches; because here we receive not only God's gifts, which are in themselves a boundless and unfathomable ocean, but we receive His own self—the Infinite Giver of all these Gifts. Now, once He gives us what is infinite, He has nothing greater to bestow upon us. Oh! what a priceless treasure, then, is the most Holy Sacrament! The Divine Body of the Redeemer is made our food!—that is to say, the living flesh of God Himself produced from the most pure blood of the Virgin Mary—the most stupendous miracle of God's Wisdom, Power, and Goodness—the true jewel—the real treasure—the object of the complacency of God the Father—the living Temple inseparable from the Eternal Word—the great masterpiece of the Holy Ghost—the Sun of Paradise—the glory of the universe—the manna of the Angels and the Saints—the Infinite delight of every pure heart—all that is beautiful, all that is good, all that is great in the Creator and the creature united together in one Divine Person! Oh! what a priceless treasure is the Holy Sacrament! Oh! truly supersubstantial bread!

From what has been said, we may easily understand with what a great, full love, as far as our feeble nature will permit, we ought to reciprocate such surpassing and incomprehensible love on the part of God. We ought to keep this divine love ever present before our eyes when we receive the holy communion, and it ought to form the object of all our thoughts, so that our soul may not remain cold to such ardent love on God's part, but, on the contrary, may become all aflame with a burning love of Him who has loved us so much. This fire of love will not only be the strongest proof of gratitude which we can give to God, but it will prove, moreover, the most efficacious means to obtain that purity which is required for the reception of this Sacrament, and which Saint Teresa insists upon when she tells us that "a great servant of God being desirous to communicate daily, our Lord showed her a most beautiful globe or ball of crystal, saying to her: *When you are as pure as this crystal you may do so*; though, notwithstanding this, He immediately granted her permission to communicate as she desired".

§ 2. Reciprocity of love.

The purity which would be required for approaching the Holy Communion has always, in a certain sense, frightened the most holy souls. Saint John the Baptist, the greatest of all the saints, declared that he was not worthy even to touch the Redeemer's shoes, and he said so with perfect truth. His words cannot be

regarded merely as an expression of exaggerated humility, as some may suppose: they convey, on the contrary, a most clear and evident truth; for there can be no proportion whatever between the sanctity of the greatest of the saints—Saint John the Baptist—and the sanctity of the Saint of saints—Jesus Christ. Not even His own most holy mother—the ever immaculate Virgin Mary—was worthy to kiss the earth whereon her Son, Jesus, had placed His foot. Now, the purity of Mary was the most perfect image of the purity of God which can be found in a mere creature. Let us reflect, then, whether *we* can ever be worthy to receive within us, and to place near our heart, the most sacred Body of the Redeemer! This is why the purity which would be required for the reception of the most Holy Communion has always, in a certain sense, terrified the saints.

Nevertheless, since we know that God does not demand from us all that His own infinite Sanctity would require, but rather what His infinite Mercy is pleased to accept, we are accustomed to approach the Holy Communion with confidence, we beg every day for this divine food, and many of us actually receive it daily. But yet, who can doubt, at the same time, that we ought to strive to acquire for this purpose the greatest possible sanctity? This purity, however, can be acquired only by love, and all the purity that is possible can be acquired only by the greatest possible love.

§ 3. Why God gave us this great gift.

Saint Teresa next proceeds to inquire into the motive which influenced the Divine Shepherd to bestow upon us so great a gift; and although the motive which she assigns seems but one of very many which might be put forward, it is, nevertheless, the one which includes all the others. She says, then, that God was pleased to supply us with a food so substantial and heavenly, in order that we might be thereby strengthened to execute perfectly the divine will. Now this is the motive of all God's gifts to us; since He does not, and cannot, bestow any favour upon us, except to the end that His most holy will may be fulfilled. Here are the Saint's words: "Since the good Jesus knew how difficult a thing this was (viz., to say: *Thy will be done*), and knew, at the same time, our weakness . . . He saw that we had need of a remedy against it. Therefore He asks of His Eternal Father to give us this bread. . . .

"For if you tell a rich man, who lives at his ease, that it is God's will that he should fare less sumptuously, in order, at least, that others who are dying of hunger may receive bread from him, he will discover a thousand reasons for not understanding this divine precept, when it does not suit his own convenience. Tell a detractor that it is God's will that he should love his neighbour as he would love himself, and he will not listen to you with patience, and no amount of argument will make him understand this.

Tell a religious, who is accustomed to certain violations of rule, that he ought to give good example, and to remember that he is bound not merely to repeat the words, 'Thy will be done,' when he says the 'Our Father,' but that he has sworn and promised to accomplish in his conduct this will of God; that it is God's will that he should observe his vows, and that in giving scandal he acts very much against them, though he does not break them altogether; that, having vowed poverty, he ought to observe it perfectly, since such is the will of God—tell him all this, yet, nevertheless, all these considerations will not be sufficient to induce some religious to desire to carry out this will of God in their daily lives. What, then, would become of us, if the Lord had not Himself performed the principal part of the work by the remedy which He has given us? There would be only very few, indeed, to fulfil those words which He addressed for us to the Father: *Thy will be done.* Seeing, therefore, the necessity that existed for it, the good Jesus found an admirable means by which He showed us the excess of His love for us, and, in His own name and in our name, He offered up this Petition: *Give us this day our daily bread"* (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 33).

We must, therefore, bear in mind that Saint Teresa considers the most Holy Sacrament a very efficacious means to help the soul in observing God's law exactly, notwithstanding the repugnance of human nature and our own

bad habits; and she asserts that the devout reception of the Blessed Sacrament will produce an amendment of life where both argument and exhortations would prove utterly fruitless.

This is a matter that has been well proved, and which merits the attention of spiritual directors, if they wish to bring their penitents to a state of great purity of conscience. We often meet with well-intentioned persons who, nevertheless, because they do not yet sufficiently understand what a great evil even venial sin is, do not adopt due precautions to avoid it. Such persons, however, feel a pleasure in communicating pretty frequently, and they esteem it a great favour if their director permits them to do so a few times during the week. Although such persons still easily fall into several faults, yet they are already well disposed; and their director will contribute more effectually towards their entire amendment by permitting them to approach the Holy Communion a few times during the week, provided that, during the days to which the permission extends, they abstain from every fully deliberate sin. Because, in that case, through fear of having to abstain from communion, they are particularly vigilant not to fall; and, meanwhile, assisted by the grace of the most Holy Sacrament, they easily overcome those habitual defects to which they were subject, or keep their souls in a state of great purity. Once this good result is secured, the director may with safety allow them to

communicate more frequently, and even daily for the entire week, provided they do not commit any deliberate fault; and he will find that, by means of their continued precautions against relapsing, and of the divine food by which they are daily strengthened, these souls will attain the desired state of purity.

After recommending us to reflect seriously on what she had already said on this subject, Saint Teresa continues thus: "It seems to me, at present (on considering the matter more carefully), that our good Jesus was obliged to resolve to remain with us, since He saw what He had given for us, and how the giving of it so deeply concerned us; and the great difficulty there would be, as I have already observed, in reducing to practice the oblation of our own will, because of our natural propensity to evil, and of our being so destitute of love and courage, that nothing less than the sight of His ardent love would suffice to awaken us" (*Ibid.*).

And surely such a signal pledge of His love as He has given us in the Blessed Eucharist ought to render us most eager to gratify Him in everything. Wherefore, we must conclude that the most precious of all the gifts which God has given us in this world, has been bestowed upon us that we may be assisted thereby in making to Him the greatest return which is in our power, namely, the absolute and entire surrender of our will.

Reflecting afterwards that, when we recite the

§ 4. Our ingratitude for so great a favour.

"Our Father," Jesus Christ (as has been already said, part ii. chap. 1) joins with us in our prayer, Saint Teresa remarks that our Lord asked permission of His Eternal Father to remain with us in the Blessed Eucharist, in order that He might secure His consent to His enduring, through love of us, the new and manifold outrages which He foresaw would be offered to Him in this most Holy Sacrament. The Saint is unable to contain herself at the thought of this, and gives impassioned utterance to her feelings in the following words: "But how, Eternal Father, could You consent to this? How can You see your Son daily in such wicked hands, after having once before consented that He should submit to their ill-treatment? You know well how they treated Him once upon a time! How, then, can Your paternal heart bear to see Him daily subjected to outrage? Oh! how many insults are daily offered to this Sacrament! In how many of His enemies' hands must His Father behold Him! How many affronts will He have to endure from heretics! Oh! Eternal Lord, why should You consent to receive such a petition? why grant it? Do not heed your Son's love for us; for, in order to accomplish perfectly Your will, and to serve us, He will even allow Himself to be daily cut to pieces. It belongs to You, O my Sovereign Lord! to look to this, for there is nothing capable of restraining Thy Son, such is the excess of His love for us.

Why must every benefit conferred upon us cost Him so much? Why does He never complain, and never speak for Himself, but always only for us? Must there be no one, then, to plead for this most loving Lord?" (*Ibid.*).

Such, likewise, ought to be the sentiments of all souls that love the Good Shepherd, who has been pleased to become a lamb for our sakes, and to make Himself our food. It ought to be impossible that any of these souls should look with indifference on the rudeness, the insults, the outrages which He has to endure in the most Holy Sacrament. Oftentimes He is forced to dwell in churches so ill-furnished, so wretched and dilapidated, that not one of us would wish his own private residence to be in a like condition—churches in which the altars are covered with dust, the ornaments decayed and broken, the tabernacles filthy and mouldy, and the altar-linens—even those which are in immediate contact with the Sacred Host—so dirty, that no one would for a moment tolerate them on his breakfast table.

Furthermore, how often does it happen that, even in populous centres, He is left quite alone during the entire day, forgotten to such a degree that it might seem as though Christians did not even know that He was dwelling in their midst. Again, what irreverence has He not to endure from those who frequent the churches with far other intentions than to visit and adore Him. These persons conduct themselves in church

with a rudeness and a want of respect which they would not venture to exhibit in the house of any common person whose guest they might chance to be. And, worse still, such persons dare even to sin in His presence, not merely by indulging in bad thoughts, which, however, cannot remain concealed from Him, but also by improper looks and gestures, and other most culpable profanations.

Finally, in our own times we have even seen the most Sacred Functions, Masses and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, made subservient not only to base human purposes, but even to the impious designs and passions of men, who availed themselves of such means to excite enthusiasm, with the ultimate object of effecting the overthrow of our most holy religion. Perhaps it is not too much to say that history does not record, in any age, such gross profanation of churches as we witness in our day! . . . In the profanation which took place in the past, the world was at least spared the sight of a pretended faith, and a hypocritical adoration. But woe to us! for God will not be mocked—*Deus non irridetur.*

To the above-mentioned irreverences, insults, and outrages, we might add all the sacrileges which are committed in other ways by Christians, the unworthy celebrations of the Holy Mass by bad priests, and the countless sacrilegious communions made by so many of the laity. But; alas! these enormities produce but a slight

impression upon us, because we lack that love which inflamed the heart of Saint Teresa! We never reflect how excessive must have been the love of Jesus Christ in wishing to dwell amongst us at such terrible cost to Himself, or how great must have been the love of the Eternal Father in consenting that He should do so! We never think of making any return for all this immense love, nor are we at all concerned to make such reparation as may be in our power for these great evils!

CHAPTER XII.

The Fourth Petition continued.

§ 1. Trustfulness with which we should receive the Good Shepherd.

In the 24th chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, Saint Teresa proceeds to speak of the reception which we ought to give the Good Shepherd, when He comes to feed our souls in the Blessed Eucharist. And speaking of our preparation for the Holy Communion, she says that we ought to approach it with a well-grounded trust, that "in every way in which the soul can desire to feed, she will find in the most Holy Sacrament sweetness and consolation," which will prove sufficient to fill her with strength and spiritual joy, to encounter every labour and persecution which may await us in this world.

Moreover, she warns us that, when approaching the Lord's Table, we ought to lay aside all anxiety regarding our mere temporal welfare, being fully persuaded that if we receive our Lord with a heart emptied of every wish and thought which is not directed to Him alone, He will not suffer us to want for anything that may be necessary for us in this world. "Beg of Him," she says, "to prepare you, and to dispose you to receive Him worthily. Be not solicitous for any other bread, you who have truly resigned yourselves to the will of God. Leave all care and anxiety regarding this matter of your temporal sustenance to your Spouse, as I have already, at great length, exhorted you to do, and He will always make provision for you. Be not in the least afraid that He will forget you, if you do not first fail in what you have promised, namely, to resign yourselves to the will of God. . . . Let us beg of the Eternal Father that He would make us worthy to ask of Him our heavenly bread; so that, as our corporal eyes cannot take delight in beholding Him, since His glory is veiled from our gaze, He may at least discover Himself to the eyes of our soul, and make her understand that He is another kind of pleasant and delicious food, and that it is He who really sustains our life."

§ 2. Singular advantages of this trustfulness.

Meanwhile, Saint Teresa would have us confidently believe that the Blessed Eucharist is, moreover, the life and health of our bodies. "Do you

think, perhaps," she writes, "that this most holy food is not likewise nourishment for these bodies of ours, and an excellent remedy even against corporal infirmities? I know that it is; and I am acquainted with a person subject to grievous ailments, who being often in pain, yet, after receiving this heavenly food, felt as it were a hand lifting her up, and was entirely relieved of her sufferings. The ailments from which she suffered were very well known, and, in my opinion, could not be feigned, yet she was frequently relieved from them in the manner stated.* And, since the wonders which this most Holy Sacrament works in those who receive it worthily are thoroughly well known, I pass by many of them, although I could relate several in connection with this person whom I have just mentioned, and regarding whom I have the most reliable information. But the Lord had bestowed upon her such a lively faith, that, when she used to hear certain persons say that they wished they had lived at the time when Christ, our Sovereign Good, conversed visibly in this world, she could not repress a smile on reflecting that, having Him so really present with them in the Blessed Sacrament, they ought to desire nothing more.

"Moreover, I know regarding this person that, though she was not very perfect, for many years, whenever she communicated, she en-

* The Saint here alludes to herself. See her *Life*, chapters 30 and 38.

deavoured to strengthen her faith as much as if she had actually seen with her corporal eyes our Lord present within her; and she spared no effort to disengage herself from all exterior things, so that she might be free to enter with her God into the poor dwelling of her soul, where she believed Him to enter really and truly. She endeavoured to recollect her senses, so that they might all be concentrated on so great a good, and might not embarrass the soul and prevent her from recognising the Guest who had come to visit her. She imagined herself to be at his feet, and, with Magdalen, she wept as copiously as though she had seen Him, with her corporal eyes, in the house of the Pharisee; and though she might not feel any sensible devotion, nevertheless, faith told her that there it was well with her, and there she remained, conversing with her Lord. And, in truth, if we do not wish to pass for dolts, and to blind our understanding, we cannot possibly entertain a doubt on the subject; for this presence of Jesus within us is not a mere picture brought before us by the imagination, as when we consider our Lord nailed to the cross, or in some other stages of His passion, in which we represent Him to our minds under such appearances as He then bore when ill-treated by His enemies; but that He is really present within us when we receive the Blessed Eucharist is a truth infallibly certain, so that we have no need to go and seek for Him at a distance, since we know that, as long as the

natural heat of our bodies has not consumed the accidents of bread, the good Jesus remains with us. Let us not, then, lose so favourable an opportunity of approaching Him.

"Now, if during His sojourn upon this earth He healed the sick by the mere touch of His garments, what doubt is there but that He will perform miracles when He is actually lodged within us, if we only have a lively faith that He is ready to grant us all that we may ask of Him while He remains under our roof? His Majesty is not accustomed to pay badly for His lodging, if we but give Him a good reception."

Who would not envy Saint Teresa this lively faith? It is, however, extraordinary, and not within the reach of every one. All pious souls are not able to represent to themselves our Lord in the Holy Communion as Saint Teresa used to represent Him to herself; nor can they, as she was accustomed to do, picture Him entering the chamber of her heart; nor do they know how to prostrate themselves there in spirit and weep before Him, as she used to do. Nevertheless, if we but revive well our faith in His divine presence, which, with the divine assistance, we may always do, and if we reflect that our Divine Redeemer—His very Self, in Body, Soul and Divinity—enters into our heart as really and truly as He once entered the house of the Pharisee where Mary Magdalen met Him, and that He remains with us as long as the sacramental species continue unchanged, just as He

remained in the Pharisee's house during the time of the banquet; if we reflect that, in that banquet-hall, He did not spurn the Magdalen from Him, but accepted her homage and her tears, heard favourably her lamentations and her sighs, and transformed her into an angel of love; if we reflect, furthermore, that in the chamber of our heart He admits to His real presence the contrite and humble soul, listens to her prayers, receives her homage, and is anxious to inflame her with His love, we shall succeed in acquiring a greater power of recollection than we have, in order to shut ourselves up within ourselves with that Divine Guest, who, in the secrecy of our hearts, admits us to relations of such close intimacy and familiarity; and there, too, we shall be able, at least sometimes, to pray and to weep in transports of admiration, of gratitude, and of love.

But if our faith should be *very* strong, then, indeed, we might promise ourselves, should the occasion arise, even those miracles of which Saint Teresa speaks. And what wonder would it be if, from that same flesh from which, as the Gospel assures us, there once went forth a virtue that healed all (Luke vi. 19), there should now also go forth a virtue and a healing power to cure our infirm bodies, which have become His living dwelling? However, faith of this kind is very rare! Nevertheless, we must still believe that the most Holy Eucharist, when received in a state of grace, is of benefit not only to our

souls, but to our bodies likewise, when this might prove serviceable to our souls. And, even though we should not sensibly perceive that any such benefit had been conferred upon us, we ought to bear in mind that all God's favours are not conferred miraculously, and that those favours which are really miraculous are not always visibly so.

§ 3. The Good Shepherd disguises Himself for our advantage.

Saint Teresa, continuing her reflections on the Good Shepherd become our food in the Holy Eucharist, goes on to say: "If you are troubled at not seeing Him with your corporal eyes, reflect that this is not expedient for us; for it is one thing to see Him in His glorified state, and another to see Him as He lived a man upon this earth. What weak mortal could be able to look upon Him as He now is and live? Could we but see Him, there would no longer be any world, or any one willing to dwell therein; because, in seeing this Eternal Truth, we should see likewise that all things which we prize here below are a delusion and a lie. And, again, at the sight of such overpowering majesty, how could such a wretched sinner as I am—who have so much offended Him—presume to be so near Him? But under those accidents of bread He has made Himself accessible; for if a king disguises himself, we seem not to mind treating with him and conversing with him without observing strict ceremony, and he seems bound to tolerate this, since he has assumed a disguise."

We should carefully note, in the foregoing passage, the comparison introduced by Saint Teresa of a king who has assumed a disguise, and with whom we consequently converse with less restraint, since he then appears to us as an ordinary person. So in like manner, the King of Glory, at whose sight this globe would melt were He to appear in all the splendour of His Infinite Majesty, disguises Himself under the appearance of a little bread; and thus we, though miserable sinners, can muster courage to approach Him—what otherwise we could not possibly venture to do.

§ 4. How He discovers Himself to some.

Nevertheless, though He has thus veiled His glory, yet He occasionally suffers some rays more or less brilliant to shine forth, by means of which the soul can see Him either partially or entirely, as far as our human condition will permit. Let us again hear Saint Teresa: "To those whom He sees likely to profit thereby He discovers Himself; for though they do not see Him with their corporal eyes, yet He has many ways of manifesting Himself to the soul, either by lively interior feelings, or by various other means. Remain, then, willingly with Him, and do not lose so good an opportunity of trading as is the time after communion. Bear in mind that to do so is of great benefit to the soul, and a matter by which the good Jesus is greatly pleased, since He delights that you should keep Him company. Endeavour, my daughters, not to lose His com-

pany, and if obedience does not enjoin some other duty, let your soul remain with your Lord. He is your Master, and He will not fail to teach you, although you should not perceive it or know it. But if immediately after Communion you allow your thoughts to wander elsewhere, disregarding and neglecting Him who is within you, then you have only yourselves to blame.

"This, then, is the proper time for our Master to teach and instruct us, and for us to listen to Him and to kiss His feet, because He has been pleased to instruct us; while at the same time we beg of Him not to depart from us. If you have to make this request in presence of an image of Christ, it would seem to be an act of folly to leave at such a moment the Person Himself in order to look upon His likeness. Would it not be an act of folly if, possessing the picture of one whom we dearly loved, we should refrain from addressing this person on his coming to visit us, and should direct all our conversation to his picture? Do you know when this is good and holy, and affords me great pleasure? It is when the Person Himself is absent, and wishes us to know that He is absent by the great aridity which we feel in our soul. Then, indeed, it is a great comfort to look upon the picture of Him whom we so justly love; and on whatever side I turn my eyes I should always wish to see it. . . . But the moment you have received your Lord in the Holy Communion, since you have then His very living Person before you,

endeavour to shut the eyes of your body and to open those of your soul to contemplate Him dwelling within you. And I tell you once again, and I would wish to repeat it a thousand times, that if you adopt this custom every time you communicate, and strive to keep your conscience so pure that you may be able to enjoy this blessing frequently, He will not come to you so disguised as not to make Himself known in many ways, in proportion to the desire you have of seeing Him; and this desire you may have in such intense degree that He will reveal Himself wholly to you."

Further down, towards the end of the same chapter, Saint Teresa says that those only who shall have adopted the means just mentioned can hope that the Lord will reveal Himself to them in the Holy Communion. "If," she says, "we make no account of Him, and the moment we have received Him go away from Him to seek after less worthy objects, what can He do? Must He use violence with us to make us see that He wishes to be known by us? He does not wish to discover Himself openly, or to communicate His favours, or give His treasures to any except to those whom He knows to desire Him eagerly, for these are His real friends. And therefore I tell you that if any one is not such, and does not approach to receive Him as such, after having done on his part all that he is bound to do, he need not expect that our Lord will manifest Himself to him, and there is no

use in importuning Him to do so. Such a one thinks that the time will never pass quickly enough which is required for satisfying what the Church commands in the reception of the Holy Sacrament; and then he presently departs from God's house, and endeavours to drive God away also. In this manner such a one, by means of worldly affairs and occupations, makes all possible haste to prevent our Lord from taking possession of the house of his soul and dwelling therein."

Wherefore those who would wish to enjoy the sweet presence of the Saviour, and who desire that He should discover Himself to them by means of those interior feelings which would inflame them with love of their dear Lord, but who, meanwhile, far from striving to give Him the best welcome in their power, content themselves with the cold and hurried recital of a few prayers by way of thanksgiving, will not obtain what they desire. The Lord comes to such persons disguised, and disguised He remains with them; so that it is merely by faith they know that they have received Him, and not by any experience of the sweet manifestations of His presence.

§ 5. Practice of interior recollection.

Here we should recall to mind what has been said, in the eighth and following chapters of the First Part, regarding the Prayer of Recollection, in which the soul fixes her attention upon God whom she has present within her, and in the spirit of faith

looks upon Him as He reposes there, adores Him, prays to Him, loves Him and embraces Him who is her dearest friend and her beloved. If it is within the power of the soul to do this at any time she prays, because of the reality of the divine presence within us, and of the immensity of God, and of our possessing Him through sanctifying grace, she will be able to do it all the better when we have really and truly treasured up within us the living body of our Divine Saviour hypostatically united to the Person of the Eternal Word; when we enjoy a happiness similar to that enjoyed by our Blessed Lady during the nine months in which she bore Him in her womb, until she brought Him forth in Bethlehem; when He is in our bosom just as really as He is in the pyxis—just as truly as He is in Heaven.

Wherefore, the moment we have received the Holy Communion, *let us shut the eyes of our body, and open those of our soul*, that we may look into our heart. Let us revive our faith, and cast a respectful and loving glance upon Jesus, who has just then taken up His abode within us. Looking upon Him as He reposes in our bosom, let us thank Him for His visit, and beg of Him to grant us His love. Let us make Him an unreserved and entire offering of our heart; and, on reflecting that our own heart is at that moment really close beside the heart of Jesus, we shall quickly feel the loving throbbings of that Divine Heart, and these must

necessarily excite responsive pulsations in our miserable heart, while it will be impossible for us not to draw forth from that furnace of love some spark to warm our own coldness. While our Divine Lord is there reposing within us, our soul may prostrate herself at His sacred feet, and kiss those glorious wounds, which shine more brightly than the stars, and shoot forth arrows of love. She may next beg of Him to lift her up and embrace her with those sacred hands, that for love of her were pierced with the nails; and, finally, she may implore Him, as a crowning grace, to permit her to enter and hide herself in the gaping wound of His sacred side.

In connection with the foregoing reflections, we may conceive countless other most consoling, most pious, and most loving affections towards Jesus, based, all of them, not on any fancies of the imagination, but upon the solid truth of His real presence. Should it, however, cost us time and labour to acquire a facility of exciting within us such pious affections, and of practising this interior recollection, we ought not to be disheartened on this account; for if we do not succeed at once in achieving this result, we shall succeed in doing so later on. Nay, rather, we ought to bear in mind what has been already remarked in the first part of this treatise (chapters 7 and 9), namely, that in this matter we must never make any violent efforts, since they would prove both useless and injurious. We must begin by casting an occasional glance upon

Jesus with the eye of faith, remembering His real presence within us: we must whisper some loving words to Him, and beg of Him to admit us to the privilege of treating with Him familiarly. In this manner, little by little, we shall learn to bring ourselves under His notice; by little and little He will discover Himself to us through various interior feelings of our hearts; and by degrees we shall learn to remain alone with Him in familiar intercourse, as a friend with a friend, as a child with its father. Saint Teresa assures us that this is the best method of thanksgiving after Communion, and the one which is most displeasing to the devil, since it is of all others the most beneficial to our souls. Wherefore she says (chap. 35), "Remember, my sisters, that if in the beginning you should not succeed to your satisfaction in feeling this devotion of which I speak, you must not be in the least disturbed on this account; for the devil will perhaps cause you some trouble of mind and anxiety, since that wicked spirit well knows the injury which you do him by adopting this practice. He will, consequently, try to persuade you that there is more devotion to be found in other methods than in this; but take my advice and do not abandon this method, for hereby the Lord will have proof of the extent of your love for Him."

And a little before the passage just quoted, speaking of the utility of thanksgiving made in this manner, she had said: "It is like approach-

ing a fire, which though very great, yet if you sit at a distance from it and hide your hands, imparts to you but little warmth, though no doubt you feel warmer than if there were no fire at all. But it is another thing if we desire to come quite close to this fire of divine love; because if the soul is well disposed, that is, if she is desirous of expelling the cold from her, and if she stays near Jesus for a little while, she remains warm for many hours afterwards, and the least spark flying out from the furnace of His love is sufficient to set her all on fire. It is so important for us, my daughters, to dispose ourselves for this, that you must not be surprised that I repeat it to you so often."

Here we may remark that whenever we receive the Blessed Eucharist with the necessary dispositions—that is to say, in a state of grace—the soul is always warmed by the increase of grace itself, which is, or implies, an increase of love; but, nevertheless, this increase of spiritual warmth is not very sensible, just as the heat of a fire is not much felt by one *who sits at a distance from it and hides his hands.* But if, on the other hand, to this necessary disposition just mentioned, we superadd a singular desire to be inflamed by the fire of divine love, and if we bring all the faculties of our soul as close as possible to this fire itself, then the soul will feel intense heat which will continue for several hours; and should any spark happen to leap out from that fire of divine love, it no sooner touches

the soul than she immediately becomes all aflame, being predisposed to this by the heat she had already acquired. This is being set on fire by love; and happy that soul which may merit to enjoy this privilege occasionally!

Saint Teresa recommends this same practice for spiritual communion, and in the chapter already quoted says: "When you do not communicate sacramentally, my daughters, during the time of hearing Mass, you may communicate spiritually, which is a very useful practice; and after such spiritual communion endeavour to enter into yourselves in the manner described above, for thereby the love of our Lord is deeply imprinted on our hearts. When we dispose ourselves to receive His favours, He never fails to bestow them in many ways which are not understood by us."

§ 6. Ejaculatory Prayer to the Eternal Father.

Saint Teresa concludes this 35th chapter with an Ejaculatory Prayer to the Eternal Father, in which she deplores the horrible outrages which were committed against the Blessed Sacrament by the heretics of her time; and since there is not the slightest doubt but that the unbelievers of our day rival the impiety of those heretics, and in an equal degree afflict the Church and fill the world with wickedness, we, too, may repeat this prayer, word for word:— "Now what does this mean, my Lord and my God? Either destroy the world altogether, or apply a remedy to these crying evils; for no

one, even though he be a sinner, as we confess ourselves to be, can endure them any longer. I beseech Thee, O Eternal Father, do not continue to tolerate them. Extinguish this fire, O Lord; for, if You will, You can do so. Consider that Your Son is still in this world. Through reverence for Him, let such foul, abominable, and filthy doings cease; for beauty and purity such as His do not deserve to be lodged where such iniquities exist. Do it not for our sakes, O Lord, for we do not deserve that You should; but do it for the love of Your Son, since we have not the courage to beg of You that He should not continue to dwell amongst us. I well know that He has obtained Your sanction to remain here with us 'to-day'—that is to say, as long as the world shall endure, for otherwise all things would come to an end, and what would become of us! But if anything is capable of appeasing You, it is that we possess here below such a pledge. Some remedy must be found, my Lord, for these terrible evils, and let Your Majesty apply it. O my God! would that there were some one who might very much importune You by prayer, and who had served You so faithfully that he might presume to beg so great a favour of You in recompense for his services, since You suffer no one to go unrewarded! But alas! I am not such a one, O Lord. On the contrary, I am, perhaps, the very one who has exasperated You so, that in punishment of my sins all these evils are sent upon the world! What, then, ought I

to do, O my Creator, unless to offer up to You this most sacred bread; and though You have Yourself given it to us, I must give it back to You again, begging, at the same time, through the merits of Your Son, that You would grant me this favour for which I ask, since He has in so many ways merited it. Do, O Lord, in pity, calm the troubled sea of this world, and let not the ship of the Church be always tossed about in such a tempest. Save us, O Lord, for we are on the point of perishing."

CHAPTER XIII.

On the Fifth Petition: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.

§ 1. God our Redeemer.

In the Meditation set down for Friday Saint Teresa explains this Petition, and in doing so considers God under "the title of Redeemer; because as Saint Paul says the Son of God became our Redeemer, and ransomed us by His Blood. He it is who has delivered us from the dominion of Satan to whom we were subject, and has prepared for us the kingdom of the children of God, and has made us His kingdom; in whom also we have redemption, that is, the pardon of our sins and the price that He paid for their ransom."

It is not necessary to prove how sweet, how consoling, how full of love is this title of Redeemer. Who can express the thoughts that must crowd upon a soul animated by Faith, when she contemplates her Father, her King, her Spouse, her Shepherd, sacrificing His divine life—and that, moreover, in such a painful and bloody manner as took place on Calvary—in order to rescue her from eternal death, and confer upon her life eternal? What feelings of consolation, what transports of love, must she not experience, when she reflects that the Majesty of God Himself was pleased to become the expiatory victim for her?

§ 2. In what sense we ask God to forgive us.

Saint Teresa continues: "All the blessings which we can desire for ourselves are included in the above-mentioned Petition, and all the evils from which we can wish to be delivered are contained in these three following petitions. The first is this: Pardon us, O Lord, what we owe Thee for being what thou art—God, the Lord of all things: pardon us, also, what we owe Thee for all Thy benefits conferred upon us, and for the offences which we have committed against Thee. And may this pardon be granted to us, O Lord, just as we pardon those who offend us, and who are our debtors.

"But lest any one may, perhaps, think that this forgiveness would prove very limited if it resembled the forgiveness which we mete out to others, we must observe that this may be under-

stood in two ways. First, we may imagine to ourselves that whenever we repeat this prayer we say it in union with Christ our Lord, who is always beside us when we pray, and in His name we offer our petitions and say '*Our Father*'. This being so, the pardon granted to us will be most complete, because the Son of God Himself has entirely discharged our debt. But these words may be understood, also, in their literal sense of beseeching God to forgive us as we forgive others; because it is presumed that every one who prays has forgiven from his heart those who have offended him, and by this method of praying we bring to our recollection the proper dispositions which we should have when we offer up our petition and approach God in prayer. Because if we have not truly forgiven those who have injured us, we pronounce sentence upon ourselves, that we are undeserving of pardon. The Wise Man says in Holy Writ: How is it possible that a man should have no mercy on his brother, and yet implore mercy for himself? If any one desire vengeance, God will take vengeance upon him, and will regard his sins without hope of forgiveness."

§ 3. Substance of this Petition.

Saint Teresa next proceeds to speak of the subject-matter of this Petition, and says that it is "very general, and embraces an infinite number of things; because our debts are beyond reckoning, while the redemption is most abundant, and the price of the ransom infinite, being no

other than the Death and Passion of Christ. Here we must call to mind and picture to ourselves our own sins and those of the entire world; the heinousness of even a single mortal sin, which, being an offence against God, cannot be atoned for by any other but God; and, finally, the satisfaction due for so many offences committed against a Majesty and Goodness so great and infinite. We owe to God love, fear, and the most profound reverence for being what He is. We are debtors to Him, also, for the offences which we commit in discharging these duties towards Him; and whenever we ask Him to forgive us our trespasses, we beg of Him to deliver us from all these debts. In the performance of this work of forgiveness consists all His wealth and all our happiness; for He is the person offended—at one and the same time the Redeemer and the Ransom."

Whenever, therefore, we repeat the "Our Father," we must bear in mind the greatness and the number of the debts which we owe to God. Their gravity is simply enormous; because an offence committed against an Infinite Majesty is an evil of incomprehensible malice. Their number is exceeding great, because no one can tell how many sins he has himself committed, while the sins of the entire world could by no possibility be reckoned. What a frightful sight it would be to behold, at a single glance, all the sins ever committed by Heathens, by Turks, by Jews, by Heretics, and, above all,

by Catholics; for the sins of Catholics surpass those of others in malice, since they possess the light of the true faith, and are consequently far less excusable when they sin. The world, according to the expression of Holy Writ, is encompassed by iniquity; and it may be said, with truth, that the number of sins committed in the world surpasses the number of the drops of water which flooded the earth at the time of the universal Deluge.

Nevertheless, the ransom which Christ paid for us at the infinite price of His Blood is immeasurably greater than all this debt; and, therefore, we may pray with confidence that God would remit it. It must, however, be understood that we must, at the same time, forgive others the debts which they may have contracted towards us by injuring us — debts which, however great we may deem them to be, yet are but a mere trifle, undeserving of the least consideration, when compared with the immense debt which we have contracted with God. And in truth, though the injuries which our fellowmen do us are a great evil, inasmuch as they involve an offence against God, nevertheless, in so far as they relate to ourselves alone, they are a mere nothing in comparison with what we deserve; for no affront or injury to which we could possibly be subjected, could bear the least proportion to the punishment which we deserve to receive from all creatures for the sins which we have ourselves committed against God.

Saint Teresa wishes also that, in meditating on this Petition, in which God is represented to us under the title of Redeemer, we should contemplate His most bitter Passion, which will prove most efficacious to inspire us with unbounded confidence in the divine mercy, and that we should pray in a special manner for all those who are in mortal sin, for our enemies, and for those who have injured us. Oh! if all those who love God did but pray a little more fervently for poor sinners, in how much greater numbers would they be converted to God, by means of the lights and graces which would be obtained for them! And, again, what a beautiful act of charity it is to pray for every blessing for those who hate us, and who strive to injure us by every means in their power!

As regards the prayer which we ought to offer up for sinners, let us hear how Saint Teresa speaks upon the subject (*Mansions*, VII., chap. 1): "Let us be particularly careful, my sisters, to pray for those who are in mortal sin, since this will be a great act of charity. For should we happen to see a fellow-Christian securely handcuffed and tightly bound to a pillar, while he was starving to death—not, indeed, through the absence of food, of which there was an abundance beside him, but through inability to make use of it—and were he reduced to such extreme weakness as to be just on the point of dying, not by a temporal but by eternal death, would it not be an act of extreme cruelty on our part

to look upon him with cold indifference in such straits, without giving him some nourishment to preserve his life? Now, what should you say if, by means of your prayers, you could loose the bonds of such a one? I beg of you, therefore, to be always mindful of such souls as these when you are engaged in prayer."

All holy souls, even those who, by reason of the peculiar circumstances of their state, were hindered most from labouring for the conversion of sinners, had always, nevertheless, an extraordinary zeal for their salvation. Saint Mary Magdalen De Pazzi possessed this spirit of zeal in a very singular degree. She used to say to God: *Desiderium animarum tuarum comedit me*—the desire of the salvation of souls redeemed by Thee hath consumed me. She was particularly devoted to prayer and penitential exercises in behalf of souls who live in the habit of sin; and yet, notwithstanding all this, she used to regard herself as culpable because of the souls that perished, saying that they would have been converted if she and her nuns had only prayed for them with greater fervour. Once, when in an ecstasy, she said that if a person could, without offending God, go to hell to save a soul, he ought to glory in doing so. She was ready to endure any sufferings for the sake of sinners; and whenever the Lord heard her prayers in their behalf, and sent her grievous pains and infirmities, she would call these *glorious sufferings*. Taking the crucifix into her hands, she

once said—" *Thou, O Lord, wast pleased to die upon a cross, and to shed all Thy blood for sinners; I too, my God, would wish to shed my blood and to sacrifice my life for their conversion.* On another occasion, when she was in an ecstasy, and was begging of God the conversion of some souls, she said—*My Lord, if you refuse me the favour of giving me these souls that I ask of Thee, I tell thee, in turn, that I will refuse to enter into possession of that glory which Thou hast prepared for me.* She used to say, also, that if God had asked her, as He once asked Saint Thomas of Aquin, what favour she wished from Him, she would have replied—*Nothing except souls.* She considered that souls were the inheritance given by the Eternal Father to her Spouse, Jesus, and she could not endure the thought that any portion of this inheritance should perish. (See her *Life*, by Paccini, chapters 98 and 99.)

Let all those, then, who are inflamed by a great love of God, as well as those who have begun to love Him even a little, pray with fervour for those other souls that are as yet wanting in this love, in order that the Lord may touch their hearts, that they may be moved to detest sin, and that they, too, may be warmed by the fire of holy charity, which will give them life in the sight of God, and may make them deserving of life eternal hereafter.

We will conclude this chapter by recording a beautiful vision which Saint Teresa says was vouchsafed to a servant of God, who, doubtless,

was no other than herself. "There appeared to her," she says, "Christ crucified, who told her to take out the nails with which mankind had crucified Him, and these are (said He) *want of love of My goodness and beauty, ingratitude for and forgetfulness of My favours, and hardness of heart against My inspirations.* But (He continued) after you shall have removed these three nails, I still remain fastened by three others, namely, *by an infinite love, by gratitude for the blessings which My Father gives you through Me and for My sake, and by tender mercy to receive you*" (*Meditation for Friday*).

CHAPTER XIV.

The Fifth Petition continued.

§ 1. On punctiliousness in matters affecting our personal dignity.

SAINT TERESA, explaining this Petition in the 36th chapter of her *Way of Perfection*, speaks of the punctiliousness in matters affecting their own honour and dignity, to which even religious and pious persons are liable; and she tells us how they must rise above such wretched trifles, which would infallibly prove a hindrance to their spiritual progress. Then, after having said that one who has already surrendered his will to God ought to have likewise made a perfect sacrifice of all sensitiveness regarding his

personal honour and dignity, she turns to our Lord and addresses Him thus: O my Lord, if there be any to keep me company in this, and who have not yet understood this point—if, I say, there be any such, I beg of them in Your name to remember this matter, and not to take any notice whatever of certain trifles which they call wrongs and grievances; because so long as we allow ourselves to be affected by these punctilios of honour, we seem to be but building houses of straw as children do.

"Would to God, my sisters, that we really understood what honour is, and in what the loss of it consists! I do not speak now of us, nuns, for great indeed would be our misfortune if we had not yet learned this; but I speak of myself alone, as I reflect upon the time when, following the example of the world, I valued honour so much without understanding what it was. Oh! how I then resented certain matters, and thought myself aggrieved by things of which I am now ashamed! And yet I was not one of those who attach undue weight to these points of honour, but still I did not take my stand upon the main point, because I did not make due account of the *true* honour which brings some advantage with it, namely, the honour which benefits the soul. Oh! how truly was it said that *honour and profit cannot stand together.* I do not know whether these words were spoken in the sense in which I have applied them; but it is perfectly true to say that the soul's profit and what the

world calls honour can never go hand in hand. It is astonishing to see how the world takes the wrong side. Blessed be God who has called us out of it!"

She then proceeds to speak of certain matters specially relating to monks and nuns, and says: "Remember, my sisters, that the devil does not forget us, Religious: even in monasteries he invents honours, and lays down his code of laws for the guidance of religious persons with respect to them. Those, for instance, who are engaged in study must proceed in their studies according to a certain ascending scale; so that one who has got so far as to read Theology must on no account condescend to read Philosophy, for it is reckoned a point of honour to be ever ascending and never to descend; and to such a degree is this feeling carried, that even if it were enjoined by obedience to turn back to a lower study, a person would consider it a wrong, and there would be found some to take his part and say: 'This is an affront'. Whereupon the devil immediately suggests reasons in support of this view, and leads the Religious to suppose that even God's law justifies it.

"So, too, among nuns, she that has filled the office of Superior must be considered ever afterwards ineligible to other lower offices. Seniority must always be kept well in view (a matter that we are not likely to forget), and it would sometimes seem as if, in acting thus, we even claimed some merit for ourselves, because, indeed, we

are carrying out what the Rule enjoins. In truth, this is a matter to be laughed at, or, to speak more correctly, it is rather to be deplored, seeing that though the Rule enjoins that due respect be paid to Superiors and to seniors, it does not forbid us at the same time to be humble. The provisions of the Rule regarding dignities have been wisely established for the sake of preserving harmony and order in the community; but I must not be so strict with regard to the observance of matters which affect my own personal dignity, as to consider this point of order as of equal importance with other matters affecting it which perhaps I observe imperfectly. Let not our entire perfection consist in observing the Rule in this single point: others will be sure to mind it for me, even if I should be inclined to forget it. But the truth is, that since we are inclined to mount higher (even though by gratifying this inclination we shall not mount to heaven), so it seems to us that under no circumstances are we to descend to a position of inferiority.

"O my Lord! are You not our Exemplar and our Master? Most assuredly You are. Now in what did Your honour consist, most honoured Master? You did not forfeit it in being humbled even to death. No, my Lord, but thereby You gained honour for us all. Oh! for the love of God, my sisters, consider by what a bad road we shall travel if we follow this one; for from the very start it is the wrong one, and may God

grant that no soul perish through insisting on these miserable points of honour, without knowing in what honour really consists."

The teaching of Saint Teresa in this passage is very clear. She warns us never to take notice of any slight which may be offered to our self-esteem, since, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, we ought to love not honours but humiliations. Above all, we ought to attend to the advice which she gives us when, in accordance with the wise rules which regulate every society and community, dignities and marks of respect may happen to fall to our lot. It is right that the person who is placed in a position of authority or dignity should receive all the respect that is due to him; the rule or law which prescribes this ought to be observed by all: but, nevertheless, the person in whose favour such rule or law has been made ought not to be too jealous of his dignity; he ought not to insist rigidly on his rights; but, on the contrary, he ought to be ready to renounce all such things willingly, in order to practise holy humility. A Christian's true honour is to be found only where Jesus Christ found it, namely, in the glorious dishonour of the Cross.

As this matter is of such importance, we shall here insert, for the benefit more particularly of Religious, some reflections of Saint Teresa, taken from the 12th chapter of her *Way of Perfection:* "May our Divine Lord," she says, "by His most holy Passion deliver us from saying, or

even from deliberately dwelling on the thought that 'I am the Senior in Religion,' or 'I am the oldest in years'; 'I have laboured more than others; others are treated more considerately than I am'; and so forth. Should such thoughts enter your mind, you must drive them away immediately. If you dwell upon them, or converse about such things one with another, they will become a very plague, and from pursuing this course great evils spring up in convents. Should you have a Superioress who tolerates such things in any degree however slight, you may rest assured that God has permitted you to be governed by such a Superioress in punishment of your sins, and that from her negligence in this matter your ruin will commence. Call, therefore, upon God, and let all your prayers be directed to the end that He may apply a remedy, and rescue you from the danger in which you are placed. . . . God forbid that those who wish to serve Him should be solicitous about honour, or fear dishonour. . . . There is no poison in the world which destroys bodies so effectually as these things destroy perfection."

Saint Teresa will not even have us express sympathy with those who have been subjected to slights like those of which we have spoken, since they are trifles undeserving of any notice whatsoever. Wherefore she would not have us address persons to whom a slight has been offered in such terms as the following: "How can you endure this wrong! May God give

you patience! A saint could not suffer more!" Still less would she have us show any sympathy with resentment under a sense of wrong, by saying, for example, "Surely you cannot possibly be expected not to resent this? On the contrary, it is right to let people see that you feel such matters." Wherefore she concludes as follows: "Oh, for the love of God, my sisters, let no indiscreet charity ever move you to exhibit sympathy with another in anything relating to these slights; for in doing so you would only be imitating the conduct pursued towards holy Job by his wife and friends".

§ 2. On forgiveness of injuries.

With regard to the forgiveness of injuries, Saint Teresa remarks, "how highly God values our loving one another, since the good Jesus might have proposed other considerations to His Father, and said: 'Pardon us, O Lord, because we perform great penances; or, because we pray and fast much, and have given up everything for Thy sake; or, because we love Thee exceedingly, and would lay down our lives for Thee'; or because of many other like reasons which might have been put forward. But yet the only reason our Lord was pleased to advance was this: 'As we forgive them that trespass against us'; and perhaps He said this, and put forward this motive in our behalf before His Eternal Father, because He knew how attached we are to this miserable feeling of honour, and with what difficulty we are induced to forgive from

our heart those who have injured us" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 36).

All the saints have been distinguished by their readiness to forgive injuries, and many of them were animated by feelings of singular affection towards their most bitter enemies, so that they even singled them out for special manifestations of their good-will. Perhaps they were induced to act thus by the example of Jesus Christ upon the cross, who, in a certain sense, seemed to prefer His enemies to His friends, since He offered up a special prayer for the former rather than for the latter.

Moreover, it is evident that the love of our enemies is the most certain proof of sincere charity. For to love our benefactors is not only easy but almost necessary, considering the natural tendencies of the human heart; to love one who has neither served nor injured us, is a matter in relation to which we neither feel any special attraction or repugnance; but to love our enemies is a matter of extreme difficulty, from which our natural instincts shrink.

And here we may very appropriately introduce a doctrine laid down with perfect truth by Saint Teresa, namely, that the practice of charity towards our neighbour is the very best proof which we can have in this life that we possess perfect love. "In my opinion," she says, "the surest test to discover whether we observe these two things (i.e., *the twofold precept of the love of God and of our neighbour*), is to fulfil well the

precept of charity towards our fellow-men. Because we can never know with certainty whether we really love God, although there are some signs by which we may infer it; but we can more easily discover whether we love our neighbour (*since we may confer favours on our fellow-man, while we cannot confer them on God*). Be assured, therefore, that the more you practise the love of your neighbour, the more will you advance in the love of God. For so great is the love which His Divine Majesty entertains towards us, that in reward of the love which we bear towards our fellow-men, He will cause the love of Himself to increase within us; and of this fact I have not the slightest doubt" (*Mansions*, V., chap. 3). If we be generous, therefore, in loving our enemies, we shall be perfect in charity towards our neighbour, and in this we shall have the strongest proof that we fulfil perfectly the divine precept of love.

§ 3. The love of their enemies is found in a perfect degree in true contemplatives.

Saint Teresa goes on to say that should any one seem to be endowed with the gift of perfect contemplation, without being, at the same time, very firm and resolute in forgiving even the most grievous injuries, such a person "need not put much trust in the genuine character of her prayer; for a soul that God really unites to Himself in such sublime prayer as that of contemplation, is not in the least affected by any slights or injuries to which she may be subjected, nor is she at all concerned at

being esteemed rather than despised. But I have made a mistake: I should rather have said that she *is* concerned, seeing that honours afflict her much more than disgrace, and that a life of peace and tranquillity pleases her less than one of suffering. For when the Lord has truly bestowed upon her His Kingdom in this world (i.e., *the gift of perfect contemplation*), she no longer wishes for anything here below; and she knows that this is the true course to pursue in order to reign in a more exalted sphere, since she has seen by experience the good that flows therefrom, and how much a soul advances and is benefited by suffering for God. For His Divine Majesty very rarely confers such great graces and favours upon any except those who have cheerfully endured many trials for His sake; and, as I have remarked elsewhere in this book, the trials of contemplative souls are very great, since our Lord loves to raise to the heights of contemplation those whom He has tried by sufferings. Know, then, my sisters, that inasmuch as these contemplative souls have already come to know God, who is everything, they pay little heed to mere transitory things. If upon the first assault some grievous injury or affliction troubles them, they no sooner perceive this than reason comes to their assistance, and seems to raise its standard in their defence; and thereupon the trouble that had just begun to assail the soul is in an instant almost annihilated, by the joy she feels in perceiving how the Lord has

afforded her an opportunity whereby she may acquire, in His sight, more graces and favours in the space of a single day, than she could gain in ten years by labours and pious exercises undertaken voluntarily by her.

"This, as far as I know, is a matter of very ordinary occurrence; for I have spoken with many contemplatives who prize afflictions as other persons prize gold and jewels, since they know that it is by afflictions they have to acquire spiritual riches. Such souls are very far from esteeming themselves on any account: they take delight in having their failings known, and in mentioning them when they see themselves esteemed by others. The same thing occurs whenever any allusion may happen to be made to their noble birth, for they know that this will avail them nothing in the kingdom that has no end. . . . This must be the reason why he on whom the Lord confers the grace of possessing this humility, and this great love of God in all that regards His service, becomes so utterly forgetful of himself that he cannot even imagine that others think well of him, and cannot possibly bring himself to regard it in the light of an injury that they should hold him in little esteem.

"These last-mentioned effects are found in persons who have reached the higher degrees of perfection, and to whom our Lord very frequently grants the grace of uniting them to Himself by perfect contemplation; but as regards the first result to which I alluded above,

namely, being resolved to bear injuries patiently, however painful they may be, I say that he to whom the Lord grants the grace of arriving at union with Himself will obtain this result in a very short time. But if he should not obtain these results, nor find himself much strengthened in these sentiments after this kind of prayer, then he must conclude that God has not really favoured him with the Prayer of Contemplation, but that what he supposed to be such was merely some illusion of the devil, in order to excite in him sentiments of vain-glory. It is quite possible that in the beginning, when the Lord confers these favours, the soul may not be endowed immediately with this strength of which I have been speaking; but I maintain that if our Lord continue to bestow His favours upon her, she will acquire this strength in a short time; and even though she may not be strong in other virtues, she will be so, however, in the virtue of forgiving injuries.

"I cannot believe that a soul which has approached so near to Mercy Itself, when she comes to understand what she really is, and the many heinous offences that God has forgiven her, could fail to pardon others instantly and from her heart, and even, in perfect tranquillity and peace, to cherish a friendly disposition towards those who have injured her. Because when a soul keeps before her the kindness and the favour which God has shown to herself by so many manifestations of His love, she is forced

to rejoice at being afforded an opportunity of pardoning her enemies, that thereby she, in turn, may give some proof of the love which she bears to God. I repeat once more that I know many persons on whom God has bestowed the favour of raising them to a supernatural state, by the gift of this Prayer of Contemplation of which I have spoken; and though I have noticed in them other failings and imperfections, yet I have never seen in one of them, nor do I believe I ever shall see in any such (provided that their gift of contemplation, as has been said, really proceeds from God), this failing of not forgiving their enemies. Let the person, then, who receives great spiritual favours carefully observe whether these effects of which I have been speaking go on increasing in him, and should he find none of them in himself, then let him fear greatly, and let him not believe that these favours which he has received have really come from God, since God always enriches the soul that He visits. This much is certain, namely, that though the spiritual favour itself and the consolation which it brings with it may soon pass away, nevertheless the fact that they have really come from God is gradually discovered by the advantages which the soul has derived from them" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 36).

The foregoing doctrine of Saint Teresa, in addition to being most true, is so clear that it needs no comment. We may, however, in passing, call attention to the statement of the

Saint that she has always observed that true contemplatives are very perfect in the love of their enemies, *even though in other respects they may have failings and imperfections.* Wherefore those persons are very liable to err, who, on discovering imperfections in souls favoured with extraordinary graces, forthwith conclude that these favours are nothing more than illusions of the devil, and, to test the truth of this assumption, subject such souls to the most trying ordeals. For extraordinary favours, as Saint Teresa says in several parts of her works, are, indeed, an indication that God intends to conduct the souls on whom He bestows them to a high degree of perfection, provided they correspond to the special predilection which He manifests towards them; but these extraordinary favours are no proof whatever that these privileged souls have already actually succeeded in attaining this great perfection. Wherefore it is quite possible that though God, and not the devil, were really the author of these favours, nevertheless, the soul might not yet have acquired sufficient strength to endure the test to which she might be subjected. Consequently, in this matter there is need of great discretion, which will be obtained by prayer and by distrusting one's own lights. But if any one should urge, in opposition to this view, the fact that some of the saints have tested such souls by subjecting them to very severe ordeals, I reply that the saints received from God special lights and inspirations which

are denied to very many directors of souls. However, regarding this point we shall have something to say later on.

CHAPTER XV.

On the Sixth Petition: And lead us not into temptation.

§ 1. God our Physician.

COMMENTING on this Petition in the Meditation set down for Saturday, Saint Teresa considers God as our Physician, and writes as follows: "This title of Physician is very pleasing to His Divine Majesty, and it was to the duties of this office that He devoted Himself most during His sojourn in this world, healing the innumerable corporal ailments of the sick, and bringing relief to souls grown old in vice. Wherefore He gave Himself this title when he said: *They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill.*

"His Divine Majesty discharged the duties of this office in favour of man, comparing Himself to the Samaritan who cured with oil and wine him whom the robbers had stripped, wounded, and left half dead. The titles of Physician and Redeemer signify one and the same thing, and differ in this alone, that the title of Redeemer, as Saint Paul says, has respect only to past sins, while that of Physician

has reference to our present wounds and infirmities and to all future ailments."

§ 2. What it is that we ask of this Physician.

The Saint wishes "that we should persevere in asking grace of this Divine Physician, in order that He may not suffer us to be overcome by present and future temptations, or to relapse into our former sins".

She cautions us, however, "not to beg of Him that He will not suffer us to be tempted, but only that we be not overcome by temptation; for temptation, when vanquished by God's grace and the act of our own free will, redounds to God's glory and increases our own merit. It is for this reason that His Divine Majesty commands us to pray in these words: *lead us not into temptation*, giving us thereby to understand that whenever we are tempted it is by God's permission; but our being overcome by temptation is attributable solely to our own weakness, while, if we vanquish it, the victory is His, not ours.

"Let us reflect, then, how true it is that we are all weak and infirm, and covered over with the wounds of sin, both because we have inherited a corrupt nature from our fathers, and also because we ourselves, by our sins and evil habits in the past, have weakened ourselves still more, and have wounded ourselves from head to foot. Let us, therefore, present ourselves in this condition before this Heavenly Physician, and beseech Him not to allow us to fall into

temptation, but to sustain us with His powerful hand, and not leave us without His care and assistance."

Wherefore Saint Teresa wishes that we should consider "the blindness of our understanding; the corruption of our will, which is so prone to follow its own inclinations and to indulge in self-esteem; the forgetfulness of our memory with regard to God's favours; the freedom of our tongue in idle speech; the levity of our heart and its inconstancy in yielding to foolish thoughts and not persevering in good resolutions, and, in general, its vain-glory in every good work, and its want of interior recollection".

And surely, if we would approach our Heavenly Physician with that profound humility and that anxious desire to be cured which we ought to have in such circumstances, it is very necessary that we be filled with a deep conviction of the seriousness and danger of these our infirmities. Whosoever knows that he is ailing seriously does not delay a moment in seeking the aid of a physician, and his sole concern is to procure the remedies and drugs that are suitable to his disease; while, on the other hand, he who supposes himself to be in good health will not even bestow a thought upon such things.

Now it is a great consolation to a poor sick man to know that he is in the hands of a good physician, and the better the physician is, the more is the sick man comforted and confident.

§ 3. Difference between earthly physicians and the Heavenly Physician of souls.

Let us hear Saint Teresa on this point, who institutes a comparison between the physicians of this world and the Heavenly Physician of our souls. "Let us consider," she says, "the character of earthly physicians. They never visit any patient unless they are summoned, and they visit most willingly those by whom they are best paid, and not those who stand most in need of their services. They exaggerate the nature of the illness, and they frequently delay the cure in order that they may make more profit out of their patient. They prescribe for the poor without visiting them, being satisfied with a mere report of their condition, while they are careful to attend personally upon the rich. They do not supply to rich or poor the medicines which they prescribe, but these drugs, which are very dear and very nauseous, have to be purchased; and yet, after all this has been done, the cure is in the end extremely uncertain.

"O Heavenly Physician, who in none of these particulars, but in name only, resemblest the physicians of this world! You pay Your visits without waiting to be summoned, and You come to the poor more readily than to the rich. You cure all by visiting them personally, and all that You expect in return is that the sick man should candidly acknowledge his infirmities, and should have need of Your services. Not only do You not exaggerate the difficulty of the cure or the seriousness of the ailment, but You

facilitate the recovery of the patient however grave may be his malady, and You promise them that if they but give one sigh of repentance they shall be healed. You never manifest disgust at the condition of any patient, no matter how loathsome may be his disease. You go through the hospital wards seeking out the incurable and the poor: You yourself pay Your own fees, and from Your own house You supply the medicine, and what medicine!—medicine compounded of the blood and the water that issued from Your sacred side—the blood to cure us, and the water to cleanse us, and to leave us without any mark which might indicate that we had been ailing.

"There was in the midst of Paradise a spring so abundant that it spread out into four very great rivers which watered the entire land. And so, in like manner, from the fountain of that love which burned in the Saviour's heart, we see flowing those five streams of blood which issued from His sacred feet, hands, and side, to heal our infirmities. How many sick persons die through want of a physician, or through not having money wherewith to purchase the medicine necessary for their cure! But in the case of the Heavenly Physician no such danger exists; for He offers His services readily, and comes to His patients laden with medicines to heal their every disease. And though these medicines cost Him very dear, nevertheless He distributes them *gratis* to every one who wishes to receive them, and even begs of them to accept them from

Him. By the dear price which He paid for them He made provision for our recovery; for they cost Him His very life, and we are healed by looking upon Him as He lies dead, just as, of old, those who had been bitten by living serpents, were cured by looking upon the inanimate serpent, made of brass, which was fixed upon a pole. In a word, we may rest perfectly satisfied that He is most willing to effect our cure, and we are certain, likewise, that His medicines may be easily procured. It only remains, then, for us to make known to Him our wounds and infirmities, and to lay open our hearts before Him in all sincerity."

She adds that "when the patient will not take what is prescribed for him, or will not abstain from what is prohibited, the physician usually refuses to continue in attendance upon him, unless, indeed, the patient should happen not to be responsible for his actions. But this Sovereign Physician of our souls abandons neither those who cannot control themselves, nor those who are disobedient, but treats all as if they were irresponsible, seeking a thousand devices to bring them to their right senses."

From the foregoing reflections we may easily understand what love we ought to bear to this Heavenly Physician, and how confident we ought to be that He will cure the infirmities of our souls.

At the close of this Meditation, Saint Teresa says that this would be a "very suitable time

to recall to mind the burial of our Lord, and to consider those five fountains of His wounds, which are, and will be, open until the day of the general Resurrection, for the cure of all our ailments. And since it is by these wounds that we are healed, let us endeavour to anoint them lovingly with the ointment of mortification, humility, and meekness, by labouring for the welfare of our neighbour. For though we cannot have by us in a visible form our Lord Himself, yet He has assured us that whatever we shall do to our neighbour He will take to Himself, and consider as done to Himself."

§ 4. Reflection upon the five wounds of our Lord.

There is no doubt that it will prove a very devout and salutary exercise for a soul that loves Christ to enter in spirit into His sepulchre, and there contemplate His sacred body all covered with precious wounds, and especially with those five in His hands, feet, and side, which have always excited in a particular manner the devotion of the faithful. There we may contemplate, likewise, how from these five wounds, as from so many fountains, there gushes forth the sparkling water of grace, which is capable of cleansing and healing the foul and deadly wounds which have been inflicted upon our soul by her many grievous sins. Then let the soul, filled with sentiments of the most profound humility, approach her beloved Saviour and say to Him: *Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean—Domine, si vis, potes me mundare;* and she will

have the consolation of feeling herself abundantly washed with that divine water, and of hearing in reply those comforting words: *I will. Be thou cleansed—Volo. Mundare* (Luke v. 12-13).

She must next proceed to anoint these sacred wounds with the ointments which we mentioned above, by practising in the service of her neighbour mortification, humility, meekness, and charity; because Christ our Lord regards as done to Himself whatsoever we do for the benefit of our brethren.

This truth—that what we do for our neighbour is done for Jesus Christ—takes such a firm hold of some persons, that in performing deeds of mercy towards the poor, they can see in them no other than the divine person of the Saviour Himself. Then it is that charity is truly perfect: then it is that it becomes heroic, and men do for their fellow-creatures what they would do for Christ Himself. And since, if they were to see our Lord hungry, they would willingly take the bread from their own mouths to give it to Him, and would place before Him their choicest viands, so, too, they are ready to suffer hunger themselves in order to relieve the wants of their neighbour, and they have not the heart to send them away with nothing but the refuse of their table. As far as their circumstances will allow, they always act towards the poor with a certain princely liberality, and always give them more than they might be able to afford, and the very best that their circumstances will allow.

Animated by such faith, they challenge our admiration as they stand by the bedside of the sick, and most so when these happen to be suffering from loathsome diseases. Since they behold Christ Himself in the person of these afflicted beings, they are touched to the heart with such a holy and overpowering feeling of compassion for them, that they treat the diseased bodies of their neighbour with a tenderness like that which we may suppose Mary Magdalen to have exhibited towards the dead body of the Redeemer, after it had been taken down from the cross and placed in the arms of His sorrowing mother. Indeed we may even say that they act with a feeling of greater satisfaction and love than Magdalen did; for she knew that it was out of her power to bring any relief to the body of her beloved Master, since He was already dead, whereas those charitable souls of whom we are speaking see Him still living and capable of being relieved, in the persons of his sick and suffering brethren.

Because of this lively faith, there is no sore so loathsome that such persons will shrink from touching it, and sometimes it affords them pleasure even to place their lips to the most horrible ulcers. And, indeed, who would refuse to touch in this manner the wounds of the Redeemer, if they could only see Him visibly before them? Those who are not themselves animated by this lively faith, look upon such acts as these as incredible miracles of charity;

but the persons who actually perform them under the influence of faith, do not consider that they are doing anything great or wonderful, but look upon themselves as simply gratifying a most natural desire of their hearts. Such souls, however, are few, and rarely to be met with; because few are endowed with that lively faith which causes them to see in the person of their neighbour no other than the person of the Redeemer Himself.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Sixth Petition continued.

§ 1. Of manifest temptations.

FROM the 38th to the 41st chapter of her *Way of Perfection*, Saint Teresa treats of temptations and of the remedies to be employed against them, and lays down very excellent doctrine on the subject, which might furnish matter for long treatises. We can, however, do no more than touch lightly upon the question.

The Saint addresses herself more particularly to those temptations which are most to be dreaded by pious persons, and she says that manifest temptations do not fall under this head; for as brave soldiers love battle in order to obtain booty and win promotion, so pious souls, knowing by experience what great virtue and

merit is to be acquired by battling against temptation, no longer fear the open attacks of their enemies, but on the contrary desire and love them. "Believe me, sisters," she says, "the soldiers of Christ, by whom I mean contemplative souls, long for the hour of battle. They never have much fear of open enemies, for they already know them, and they know also that by virtue of the strength which God gives to themselves, these others have no power, but are invariably vanquished, while they themselves never turn to fly, but reap very great advantage from the conflict" (chap. 38).

It is clear that this does not hold true of all classes of persons, but only of those who have reached the degree of perfect union with God, as we learn from other portions of the Saint's works. However, from what Saint Teresa has said in the passage just quoted, it is, at the same time, evident that open, manifest temptations are not those which ought to inspire the greatest dread in souls well grounded in piety and the fear of the Lord; because such souls, on seeing the enemy approach so openly, immediately arm themselves by prayer and other means of defence, so that the close of the contest invariably finds them victorious. But since we are writing here for pious souls that fear the Lord, and that are well instructed in the method of resisting the evident and open attacks of their spiritual enemies, we need say nothing further on this subject.

§ 2. Of some hidden temptations that are less dangerous.

Enlightened as she was by God, Saint Teresa places among the hidden temptations that are to be less feared, those illusions which the devil may sometimes cause by counterfeiting certain special favours which God is pleased to grant to His chosen servants, particularly during the time of prayer. Regarding temptations of this class, the Saint speaks as follows, in the chapter already quoted: "Consider, my daughters, that the devils do us harm in many ways, and do not imagine that their malice consists only in leading us to believe that favours and spiritual delights which they can counterfeit in us come from God. To my mind this seems the least part of the evil which they can do us; nay, it may even come to pass that thereby they may make us advance more rapidly towards perfection; because some, after enjoying this interior sensation of pleasure, spend more time in prayer, and since they are ignorant that the effects produced in them proceed from the devil, and see that they are unworthy of such favours, they will never cease thanking God for them, they will consider themselves under a greater obligation to serve Him, and will strive to dispose themselves for further heavenly favours, thinking that they come from the hand of the Lord.

"Continually aim at humility, my sisters, and consider yourselves unworthy of these favours, and do not seek them. If we do this, it is my opinion that the devil will by this means lose

many souls while he thinks to bring about their ruin, and our Lord will turn to our advantage the evil which Satan intends to do us. For God sees our intention, which is to please and serve Him by remaining with Him in prayer, and God is faithful. It is well, however, that we proceed with caution, in order that no injury may be done to humility by any feeling of vain-glory, from which we ought to beseech the Lord to deliver us. Do not fear, my daughters, that God will permit you to be much caressed by any but by Himself."

Those who are charged with the direction of souls that are advanced in the spiritual life, may derive very important instruction from this passage. In the opinion of some of these directors, it would seem as though the greatest danger to which a soul that is given to prayer can be exposed is that of being deceived by the devil, who can feign and counterfeit the spiritual delights and other extraordinary favours which the Holy Ghost produces in the hearts of His chosen servants. Hence it happens that when they meet with any soul that has been favoured in prayer with great interior consolations and unusual manifestations of God's pleasure, they are immediately troubled, and by their own doubts and fears throw their penitent into a state of consternation, causing her to be in constant dread lest she may be in the hands of the devil, who has received permission from God to deceive her.

Under such circumstances the soul, instead of loving prayer as the source of spiritual light, is obliged to fear it as the occasion of the demon's illusions, and this is a terrible affliction to a soul that loves God. Let directors, then, bear in mind that, according to the teaching of Saint Teresa, there is little danger to be apprehended from this source, even though these extraordinary favours which the soul enjoys should really proceed not from God, but from the devil.

Wherefore, instead of alarming such persons by hinting the possibility of diabolical illusions and deceits, directors must aim at grounding them well in humility, which, so to speak, will render them invulnerable, while they receive, as from the hand of God, whatever good and holy feelings they may experience. Furthermore, those who are too easily alarmed by the dread of these diabolical illusions ought to reflect upon those most consoling words of Saint Teresa, quoted above: *Do not fear, my daughters, that God will permit you to be much caressed by any but by Himself.* These words give us clearly to understand that, in the opinion of the Saint, these illusions and deceits of the devil, of which we have been speaking, are by no means so frequent as some persons would have us believe.

Should we meet with these extraordinary favours in a soul possessed of little or no virtue, we ought, generally speaking, to suspect that

they proceed from the devil, who makes use of them in order to make the soul proud, and to draw her away from the right path. I have said *generally speaking:* because Saint Teresa regards it as certain that God sometimes grant these favours even to sinners, in order to draw them to Himself by means of the sweet force of love (*Life*, chap. 16). But when, on the other hand, we find these extraordinary favours granted to persons who, though still liable to imperfections, are, nevertheless, solidly grounded in virtue, why, I ask, should we conclude that they are diabolical illusions, and not rather loving visitations of God, who wishes thereby to bind these souls more closely to Himself, and to inebriate them with those spiritual delights, that they may thereby be the better disposed to endure afterwards great sufferings for love of Him?

§ 3. When it is that we may doubt whether certain favours may not be temptations of the devil.

And even though the devil should sometimes intervene and counterfeit these favours, yet what harm can follow therefrom, provided the soul remains humble? Far from receiving any injury thereby, the soul, according to the teaching of Saint Teresa, will even derive from such visitations much solid advantage. Let us conclude, then, that the cause of sanctity is not served by those who represent the spiritual life as a mountain filled with pitfalls and precipices calculated to frighten timid souls, while they never impress upon such souls the idea of the

omnipotence and love of God, who guides and supports them, in order that they may ascend that rugged height in safety. It is certain that souls will succeed in mounting up to the highest perfection more easily and securely, if they fear the devil less, and place greater confidence in God.

§ 4. Example of Saint Teresa.

It will afford us much light on this subject to hear what happened to Saint Teresa herself, which deserves to be recorded for the common instruction of all. She tells us, in the 23rd chapter of her *Life*, that although she already enjoyed many extraordinary gifts and favours in prayer, nevertheless she still continued to fall into imperfections and defects. This fact caused much uneasiness to her director; for he considered it impossible that a soul so favoured by God (in the hypothesis that her gifts and favours really did come from God) could be at the same time so imperfect. He did not hesitate, therefore, to conclude that Saint Teresa was the victim of illusions, that her extraordinary spiritual gifts and favours were nothing else than the work of the devil, and that she was, consequently, in great danger of spiritual ruin. Saint Francis Borgia, later on, assured her that her spiritual favours came from God; but, nevertheless, directors who were unduly apprehensive of diabolical intervention, continued to frighten her until, as she relates in the 25th chapter, five or six persons, whom she styles great servants of

God, together with her confessor, once more decided that she was deceived by the devil, that she ought consequently to reject those favours as frauds practised upon her by the evil spirit; and even abstain from frequent communion, as being unworthy of it. Having arrived at this conclusion, they laid down for her guidance, as was natural, certain silly rules, and brought her to such a state of desolation and wretchedness, that she really had need of the consolations and extraordinary favours of heaven, in order to be able to support life.

But God, who tries souls up to the point which He knows to be for their advantage, and rescues them from suffering the moment the fitting time for doing so arrives, at length sent her Saint Peter of Alcantara, who, by his persuasive words, made her proof against all foolish fears, and even went so far as to tell her that, next to the dogmas of faith, she ought to believe with the fullest certainty that the singular graces and favours which she enjoyed came from God, and were the work of the Holy Ghost. He therefore bade her thank God from her heart for them (chap. 30).

From this example we learn how easily men are deceived, who are too prone to believing in illusions of the devil. In this world, whoever aims at excessive security against going wrong in one direction, is certain to go wrong in the opposite one; and thus those directors of whom we have been speaking, through fear of attribut-

ing to God an operation that might possibly proceed from the devil, attribute to the devil what in reality is the work of God. We have seen how this actually occurred in the case, not of a soul of ordinary sanctity, but in the case of Saint Teresa, who was a mistress of the spiritual life—the eagle of contemplative souls.

Wherefore, we may conclude, from what has been said, that when we meet with souls that are really good and anxious to love God (although they may still be subject even to notable imperfections), and who are favoured in prayer with extraordinary consolations, lights, and other favours, we ought to direct them with great simplicity, without seeking for overdue certainty as to the origin of the favours which they receive. What wonder or anxiety need it excite in us, if God wishes to caress His chosen Spouses? Ah! let us not be continually afraid that, instead of caressing them Himself, He is allowing them to be caressed by His enemy. In conclusion, we may direct attention to a very remarkable observation made by Saint Teresa in the 8th chapter of the *Foundations*,* where she says that "the greater the knowledge of God which we possess, the easier will His works appear to us" —that is to say, the easier will it be for us to understand and to believe them. Consequently,

* "The Foundations" (*Libro de las Fundaciones*): This work was commenced by Saint Teresa in 1573. It is a continuation of her *Life*, and is most interesting.—*Translator.*

the more one is enlightened by the Spirit of God, the less easily will he give way to fears.*

* It would be impossible to recommend too strongly to the notice of spiritual directors the following very wise observation of St. Bernard:—"Sic conservandæ humilitatis gratia, divina solet pietas ordinare, ut quanto quis plus proficit, eo minus se reputet profecisse. Nam et usque ad supremum exercitii spiritualis gradum, si quis eo usque pervenerit, aliquid ei de primi gradus imperfectione relinquitur, ut vix sibi primum videatur adeptus."—(*Serm. de quatuor modis orandi.*) Wherefore, we must convince ourselves of this truth—that all holy persons have their defects, and sometimes notable defects; and that, consequently, it would be a great mistake to question their sanctity simply because of these defects. Were we to argue in this manner, we might cast doubts even upon the sanctity of the canonised saints; because we learn from their lives that they were not invariably free from every imperfection, and it is probable that they were subject even to more imperfections than we read of in their lives; for their biographers, though scrupulously truthful, are, at the same time, panegyrists, their sole object in writing being to bring before the public the virtues of the saints, for the edification of all Christians. Even the greatest saints, so long as they live upon this earth, are children of Adam, and grace does not absolutely destroy in them the imperfections which proceed from our corrupt nature.

Father Michael Godinez, of the Society of Jesus, makes a very remarkable statement in his excellent book, *Practice of Mystical Theology* (book III., chap. 8), namely, that God permits in the saints various defects, such as imprudence in conduct, in teaching, instructing, and so forth, and also occasional errors (which, however, are involuntary), in order that, in consequence of these failings, they may be exposed to criticism, censure, and even to punishment. Wherefore, in order to decide whether persons are really holy, we must see whether they possess *solid virtue*, but we must never expect to find this virtue exempt from every imperfection. Whosoever should expect this, will fail to find any holy persons whatever in the world, and he will invariably form wrong judgments, and will pursue a wrong line of conduct in their regard. Should such a person ever be called upon to test the spirit of a soul as holy as Saint Teresa, he will decide

§ 5. Very remarkable doctrine of Saint John of the Cross.

We may add that, should the delights which the soul feels produce in the body any of those movements of sensuality which are most disgusting to chaste souls, not even in such cases ought we, on this ground alone, to attribute those spiritual delights to the devil. For, as Saint John of the Cross proves (*The Obscure Night*, book I., chap. 4), it may easily happen, for many reasons, that those spiritual communications, even when they come from God, may not be entirely free from these wretched movements of sensuality, which are always to be abhorred, but which are not sins when we suffer them with disgust, and are not ourselves in any way the culpable cause of them.

And should any one advance, in opposition to this teaching, a revelation said to have been made by Saint Teresa after her death, it must be borne in mind that such a revelation does not rest upon the authority of the Saint, but of the person to whom the revelation is said to have been made.* It would be more than

that she is under the influence of the devil, and will treat her as such.

* Revelations, except when they are authenticated by the Church, carry with them no authority whatever beyond that of the person who asserts that he has received them, because they depend entirely upon his good faith and soundness of judgment. For instance, if I were to assert that Saint Teresa had appeared to me, and had revealed something to me, any one who should disbelieve me would not at all insinuate thereby that Saint Teresa had been guilty of a falsehood; but his refusal to believe me would imply no more

difficult to establish the truth of such a revelation; and even though we were to grant that the revelation had ever been really made, it would still be necessary to be able to interpret correctly the terms in which the Saint expressed herself. On the other hand, the teaching of Saint John of the Cross, in the portion of his work referred to above, is so clear, as any one may see for himself, that it does not admit the possibility of doubt.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Sixth Petition continued.

§ 1. Hidden temptations that are very dangerous.

In the 38th chapter already quoted, Saint Teresa speaks of some hidden temptations which are most to be feared, because they proceed, as she says, from *treacherous enemies*. "There are some demons," she writes, "who transform themselves into angels of light; they come to us disguised, and they will never allow themselves to be known until they have worked much harm in the soul. They suck our very

than that he either doubted my truthfulness, or was convinced that I had been led astray by my imagination. Wherefore, those revelations that are said to have been made to unknown persons, or to persons worthy of little credit, do not carry with them any authority which would merit our serious attention.

blood and destroy our virtues, so that we actually walk into temptation without understanding or perceiving it. Let us, my daughters, often beg and beseech the Lord in the 'Our Father' to deliver us from these enemies, and not to permit us to be assailed by temptations so disguised as to be able to deceive us. Let us beg of Him to make known the poison to us, and not to allow our spiritual enemies to hide from us the light of truth."

§ 2. The temptation to consider ourselves rich in virtue.

The Saint then goes on to speak of those treacherous temptations, and foremost among them she places *the temptation to consider ourselves rich in virtue.* "That by which the devil can do us great mischief," she writes, "without our perceiving it, is in making us believe that we have virtues which, in reality, we do not possess. When this deceit is practised upon us, it is a very pestilence; for when God favours us with spiritual delights and communications, we seem to be merely the recipients of something, whereby we are the more obliged to serve the Lord; but in this case, it would seem as though we were giving something to God, and rendering Him a service for which our Lord is bound to pay us, and thus, by degrees, great mischief is worked in our souls. For, on the one hand, our humility is weakened, and, on the other, we neglect to acquire that virtue which we fancy we already possess. In this manner, without perceiving it, and while we think we are walking in safety, we

tumble into a ditch from which we are unable to escape, and, in acting thus, though there may be no evident danger of mortal sin which would lead us to hell, nevertheless, we become so disabled, that we are no longer able to travel along the road of perfection of which I have been speaking. I tell you that this temptation is one of very great danger."

§ 3. Remedy against this temptation.

"Whenever the thought occurs to us," continues the Saint, "that the Lord has bestowed upon us any virtue, let us bear in mind that it is a blessing which we have received on trust, and that He may again take it away from us, as, indeed, frequently happens, and not without great providence on the part of God. Have you never seen this occur in your own case, sisters? I certainly have observed it with regard to myself; because I have sometimes thought myself detached from certain things, and when it came to the trial I was so, indeed, with regard to these particular matters; but, again, at other times, I find that I am so attached to some other things, at which I should have laughed the day before, that I almost hardly know myself. Another time, I fancy that I have great courage, so that I would not turn my back upon anything that would tend to promote the service of God, and on making a trial I have found this to be true in some things; but then, again, on another day, I find that I have not courage enough even to kill an ant for God's sake, if I should meet

with any opposition. Again, I sometimes think that I would not take the least notice of anything that might be said about me, or of any detraction that persons might be guilty of in my regard, and sometimes I have found that it was really so, and that injurious words of this kind rather gave me pleasure; yet, nevertheless, there are days when even a single word afflicts me, and I would be willing to leave the world altogether because everything seems to weary and annoy me. I am by no means singular in this respect; for I have observed the same disposition in many others better than myself, and I know that it happens so.

"Now, if this be the case, who can say of himself that he possesses virtues or that he is spiritually rich, since at the very time when he stands most in need of virtue he finds himself poor? Certainly, my sisters, we, nuns, must never say this, but, on the contrary, we must always regard ourselves as poor. . . . And if others should happen to think us good, and pay us marks of respect . . . let us take heed lest both they and we should find ourselves deceived."

The Saint then goes on to speak of two virtues which we easily flatter ourselves that we possess, namely, the virtue of patience, *because we resolve to suffer, and frequently make acts of wishing to suffer much for God*; and the virtue of poverty, *because we have either taken a vow of poverty as every Religious does, or because in ou*

hearts we wish to be such as those are who lead a life of prayer. She says that frequently we possess these two virtues rather in imagination than in reality, and concludes that *the truly humble man is always doubtful of his own virtues.*

§ 4. The temptation of false humility.

In the 39th chapter of her *Way of Perfection*, Saint Teresa proceeds to speak of another temptation which, likewise, is very subtle and difficult to be discovered, because it puts on the appearance of a virtue which we can never cultivate sufficiently —that is to say, holy humility, This is, indeed, a virtue in which excess is impossible, but it is a virtue at the same time which can be counterfeited, and then it quickly becomes the occasion of innumerable deceits and errors. We repeat once more that it is impossible to go to excess in cultivating the virtue of humility; but sometimes there is such a thing as false humility, and in that case the more we cultivate it, the more deeply do we become involved in errors and dangers. Let us hear what Saint Teresa has to say on this subject. "You must likewise," she writes, "be on your guard, my daughters, against certain false kinds of humility, which, to our soul's great trouble, the devil suggests to us regarding the heinousness of our sins; for by this means he is accustomed to disturb us in many ways, even to the degree of making us abstain from going to communion and from devoting ourselves to special prayer, by persuading us that we are unworthy to do so. When persons

who are assailed by this temptation approach to receive the most Holy Sacrament, all that time which they ought to employ in giving thanks to God, is spent in thinking with themselves whether they have made sufficient preparation or not. The devil at length succeeds so far, as to make the soul believe that, because of her sinfulness, God has so entirely abandoned her, that she almost doubts of His mercy. She thinks she sees danger in her every thought, word, and deed, and that whatever she does to serve God, no matter how good it may be, is fruitless. She becomes so timid that she is rendered powerless to do any good; for it seems to her that what is good in others becomes bad in her case.

"Pay most particular attention, my daughters, to what I am about to tell you, because though it may sometimes be humility and a virtue to regard ourselves as very wicked, there are other times when the same feeling may be a very great temptation. And since I have myself experienced this, I know that what I say is true. Humility, however great it may be, never disturbs or confuses the soul, but always brings with it peace, and joy, and calm. If any one, at the sight of her own wickedness, should clearly understand that she deserves to be in hell, and ought justly to be abhorred by all men; if she is afflicted by this consideration, and can scarcely dare to ask for mercy, this feeling of grief, if her humility be genuine, will have united

to it a certain sweetness and satisfaction, so that we would not willingly be deprived of it. It does not disturb or crush the soul; but rather enlarges her, and makes her capable of serving the Lord better than before." Our readers ought to mark, with all possible attention, the characteristics of true humility as set forth in this passage, for Saint Teresa had only too much reason to ask us to note them well.

The Saint continues: "The other kind of grief, which proceeds from *false* humility, altogether disturbs and confuses the soul, and proves a torture to her. I believe the devil tries to make us think that we have humility, while he endeavours, at the same time, if he can, to drive us to despair. Whenever you find yourselves in this state, turn away your thoughts as much as possible from the consideration of your own wretchedness, and meditate on the mercy of God, on the love He bears us, and on all that He suffered for us. But if the feeling that has taken possession of you be a temptation, you will not be able to do even this much; because it will not suffer your thoughts to rest or to fix themselves upon anything, unless it be to disturb and torment you all the more. However, a great deal will have been gained, if you only discover that it is a temptation."

Wherefore, whenever the thought of our sins and of our spiritual misery destroys the peace of our soul and weakens our confidence in God, we must regard it not as true, but as false,

humility, from which we must beseech the Lord to deliver us as from a very dangerous temptation. We must then cast out of our mind the recollection of our wretchedness and sinfulness, and fix our thoughts instead on that Infinite Goodness and Mercy, in comparison with which all the sins, not alone of this world but of hell itself, are in substance a nothing; for in the sight of God both the good and the evil deeds of His creatures *are* a nothing.

Should the temptation prove so strong as not to allow us to retain our peace of mind, we must only have patience, and it will be sufficient to have discovered it to be a temptation, and not to have mistaken it for humility. This will suffice to prevent the devil from causing us to fall into those errors into which he would wish to draw us. Once we know that it is the devil who puts such thoughts into our mind, we shall know also that we must pay no heed to his suggestions. The real danger would be if we should happen to think that it was God who inspired us with these feelings. It can never be repeated too often that whatever comes from God brings with it peace, a sense of confidence, and love; while any feeling that is accompanied by anxiety and a sense of discouragement, has the devil for its author. Even though it should wear the appearance of virtue, it is in reality false virtue—it is vicious.

"The same thing happens," says Saint Teresa, "with regard to indiscreet penances, whereby the

devil gives us to understand that we are more mortified than others, and that we are doing something meritorious. If you conceal yourselves from your confessor or your superior, or if you do not give up these penances when commanded to do so, they clearly are a temptation. Be obedient, no matter what pain it may cost you; for in this consists your greatest perfection.

§ 5. Of the temptations of indiscretion in penances, and security against relapsing.

"The devil likewise makes use of another very dangerous temptation, namely, a certain sense of security, whereby it seems to us that under no circumstances whatever shall we return to our former faults or to the pleasures of the world, since we already understand what the world is, and know how all things must come to an end, and feel that the things of God afford us more solid pleasure. If this temptation should assail us in the beginning of our conversion, it is extremely dangerous; because, on account of this feeling of security, we become careless in guarding ourselves against the occasions of sin, and thus we miserably relapse into our former ways. And God grant that the relapse may not even place us in a worse condition than that in which we had been previously; for when the devil sees that there is a soul that can injure him and can help others, he does everything in his power to prevent her from rising again. Therefore, no matter how many spiritual delights and pledges of love you may receive from

the Lord, never be so confident in yourselves as not to fear that you may fall again, and be careful, likewise, to be continually on your guard against dangerous occasions."

Nothing can be more clearly evident, than that these temptations to practise penitential exercises at the suggestions of one's own caprice even in violation of the Rule of Obedience, and to regard oneself as perfectly confirmed in virtue, are exceedingly dangerous. Wherefore, after the passage last quoted, Saint Teresa goes on to inculcate the necessity of self-knowledge, in order to keep ourselves always humble. However, we have already spoken of this matter in the 7th chapter.

§ 6. Security of the spiritual life.

After having touched upon the various temptations just mentioned, Saint Teresa begins to fear lest souls may become alarmed on seeing the spiritual life surrounded by so many dangers. Therefore she addresses herself to the Lord, begging that He would be pleased to encourage such souls by His lights and inspirations, in order that, when giving themselves up to a life of prayer, they may not be unduly influenced by any feeling of fear, and she concludes with some remarks which merit our most serious attention. We shall quote her own words:—"What, then, can we do, Eternal Father, but have recourse to You, and beseech You that these our enemies lead us not into temptation? By all means let open and undisguised temptations assail us; for,

with Your assistance, we shall be able to defend ourselves more successfully against them; but who can understand these treacherous temptations? It is necessary, my God, that we continually beg of You help and a remedy against them. Suggest to us, O Lord, some means whereby we may understand them, and restore our courage. You are already aware that many do not travel by this path of prayer, and fewer still will go by it if they must perform the journey amidst so many fears. It is, in truth, a strange matter (as if the devil never tempted those who avoid this way of prayer), that all are more astonished at seeing the devil deceive even one soul that has almost reached perfection, than they are at seeing him deceive a hundred thousand others whom they know to be living in public sin, and with regard to whom it is unnecessary to examine whether they be good or bad, since their condition can be known at a glance. But, in truth, people are justified in acting thus; because among those who say the 'Our Father' in the manner which we have laid down, there are so very few led astray by the devil that, like some novel and unusual occurrence, it naturally excites surprise. For, as a rule, men take but little notice of what is constantly falling under their observation, while they wonder at things which they very rarely or never see; and the devils themselves contribute to excite in them this feeling of surprise with regard to the matter under consideration, inas-

much as the occurrence turns to their advantage, for they lose many souls by one that arrives at perfection. I repeat that the deception by the devil of souls that are leading a spiritual life is so astonishing, that I am not in the least surprised that men should wonder at it; because, unless it be through their own grievous fault, these souls are much more secure than others who pursue a different path, just as those who stand upon a gallery to witness a bull-fight, are much safer than those who in the arena expose themselves to the animal's horns. This is a comparison which I once heard used, and it seems to me very appropriate. Be not afraid, then, my sisters to travel along the paths of prayer. There are many of them to choose from (since we have already seen that there are various methods of prayer, and all of them good); for some souls derive greater profit from travelling by one road, while others are benefited by taking a different one. This path of prayer is a secure one. You will certainly be delivered from temptation more quickly by remaining near the Lord, than by keeping at a distance from Him."

Wherefore it would be deplorable cowardice to fear the temptations and dangers that are to be encountered in the spiritual life to such a degree as to be unwilling even to enter upon it, or, having entered upon it, to proceed with such extreme caution and fear as never to attain the end in view. Oh! how much more numerous

are the dangers to be encountered in leading a worldly and tepid life! Here, indeed, there are real dangers to beset our path, and real falls to be deplored.

And if, in opposition to this view, any one should urge the fact, that occasionally some persons stumble in the spiritual life, and fall while pursuing this path, we should bear well in mind the remark of Saint Teresa, that this could not have happened except through *their own grievous fault.* She does not say simply through their fault, but through their *grievous fault,* by which she must mean some very notable failing, which ought, consequently, to have been guarded against. Those persons, therefore, are very much mistaken, who fancy that, because of any trivial imperfection of which they may be guilty in His service, God will deliver them over to the temptations of the enemy of souls. They should bear in mind that while pursuing the path of the spiritual life, they will never fall into the snares which the devil may lay for them, unless on account of *grievous faults* committed by them with full advertence.

Let us be persuaded, then, once for all, that if we shall give ourselves up to a life of prayer and recollection in order to belong entirely to God, no harm shall befall us, but, on the contrary, we shall secure for ourselves every blessing, provided only that we advance with humility and under the guidance of obedience. Let us be persuaded, furthermore, that once we enter

upon this path, even though we should occasionally commit some faults through human frailty, God will not suffer us to succumb to temptation, except it be in punishment of some *grievous fault* which it is always in our power to advert to and to avoid.

Blessed Henry Suso made a good reply to the Tempter, when he sought to frighten him in the beginning of his conversion by representing to him the dangers of failing in the course upon which he had entered. "God," replied the holy man, "calls me to Him, and if I fling myself into His arms, is it possible that He will step aside so that I fall?" The soul cannot possibly fling herself into the arms of God with such violence as not to find His arms strong enough to support her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Sixth Petition continued.

§ 1. Holy love and fear render the path of the spiritua life more secure.

SINCE it is the wish of Saint Teresa that, in following the path of the spiritual life, souls should proceed, as far as possible, tranquilly and with confidence, she begins the 40th chapter with this prayer: "O good Master, give us then some remedy, so that we may not be suddenly surprised by the snares of our enemy in so

dangerous a war" (*as that which the devils wage against us, and more especially when they tempt us under the appearance of doing what is good*). She then goes on to say that the desired remedy is to be found in *love* and *fear:* "Love will make us quicken our pace, while fear will make us be cautious where we set our feet, so that we may not fall upon this road in which there are so many obstacles to cause us to stumble, and which we must continually encounter as long as we live upon this earth. With this remedy, however, we may advance with the certainty that we shall not be deceived."

Speaking later on of love, after having said that we can never be absolutely certain of possessing it as long as we are in this world, she remarks that there are, nevertheless, certain signs by which its presence may be known, and which are so clear that even the blind may see them.

§ 2. Signs of the love of God.

The Saint then proceeds to describe these signs which indicate the existence of the love of God in a soul. "Those," she says, "who love God praise everything that is good, desire everything that is good, always associate with the good, and always assist and defend them. They love nothing but the truth, and those things that are worthy of being loved. Do you think it possible that those who really love God very much should love vanities, or riches, or worldly matters, or pleasures, or honours? Those who love God never engage in strife, they are never

envious, and this simply because their sole study is to please their Beloved. They are consumed with the desire that He should love them, and so they make every effort, even though it should cost them their lives, to discover how they may best please Him. For it is impossible that the love of God, if it be real love, should remain long concealed. Look at Saint Paul, look at Mary Magdalen, under its influence. In three days one of them—Saint Paul—began to give visible indications that he was sick with love: Magdalen showed this from the very first day, and how plainly she did so! For it must be remembered that love admits of degrees, and consequently it manifests its presence in proportion to its strength. If one have but little love, it is not much perceived; if one have it in an intense degree, it becomes very evident; but whether it exists in a great or in a lesser degree, if it be true love of God, it invariably manifests itself. . . . I fail to understand how it can remain hidden. For if, when we love creatures we cannot possibly conceal the fact, however much we may wish to do so (though this love of creatures is so base as not to deserve the name, and I am ashamed to use such a comparison), how can we conceal a love so strong as is the love of God? It is a love so reasonable that it is ever on the increase; because it has so great an object to love that it sees nothing to induce it to leave off loving. It has also very powerful motives to love; being

based upon the certainty of being rewarded by God with a return of love—a fact of which there cannot be the slightest doubt, since it has been so evidently proved by the great sorrows, and labours, and sufferings which He endured, even to the shedding of His blood and the sacrifice of His life, in order that we might not entertain the slightest doubt of this love."

Having thus described the signs of the love of God, Saint Teresa remarks how consoling it will be at the hour of death to feel that during life we have loved God. "It will be," she says, "a great comfort at the hour of death, to know that we are going to be judged by Him whom we have loved above all things. We can present ourselves before Him with a sense of perfect security regarding our indebtedness, since we shall not be going into a strange country but into our own, for it belongs to Him whom we love so much, and who in turn loves us so intensely."

She afterwards describes the horrors of a death unaccompanied by the love of God—"for then we fall into the hands of the Tempter—so cruel, so hateful of all good, so bent upon all evil". What will become of the poor soul when she shall suddenly fall into such hands, after having been just freed from the pains and sufferings attendant on death? What repose can she expect? How dreadfully mangled she will descend into hell! What a multitude of demons will be there! What a horrible place it will be!

What a miserable lodging! Now, if in this world no one, and least of all those accustomed to luxuries (who are perhaps the very persons who will go to hell in the greatest number), can endure to be badly lodged even for a single night, what think you will be the sufferings of the unfortunate soul that will be lodged in hell for all eternity?"

§ 3. The love of God in contemplatives.

Speaking in this chapter of contemplatives, Saint Teresa remarks, first of all, that in them "love is always great, since otherwise they could not be contemplatives, and in consequence of its intensity it discovers itself in various ways. Being a great fire, it cannot but cast a great fire around." She then goes on to say that if this great love be wanting in them, they ought to be very cautious in putting faith in their gift of contemplation, since they may be only deceived by the devil. However, she assures them, at the same time, that if they but cultivate humility, and manifest the condition of their soul to their spiritual director with all due sincerity, they can never suffer by such artifices of the demon, but on the contrary will reap real advantage therefrom, as has been already said (chap. 16, § 2).

But next, addressing those who feel within their hearts that great love which manifests itself by those indications mentioned above, and who feel also within them that holy fear of which she is about to speak later on, she exhorts them to have no fear of illusions on the part of the devil,

and to rest assured that the contemplation with which they are favoured really proceeds from the Spirit of the Lord. "If you feel," she says, "this love of God of which I have spoken, and His fear, of which I shall speak presently, be cheerful and tranquil; for the devil, in order to disturb the peace of your soul, and to deprive you of the great blessings of contemplation, will suggest to you a thousand false fears, and will cause others to excite them in you likewise. For as he cannot gain possession of your soul, he endeavours at least to make you lose in some way, and to make those also losers who might, perhaps, derive considerable advantage from believing that God is the author of those great favours which He confers on a creature so wretched, and that such favours are possible; for it seems that we are sometimes inclined to doubt their possibility, through forgetting His ancient mercies. Do you imagine that it is of little importance to the devil to excite such fears? On the contrary, it is a matter of the greatest importance to him, for thereby he is able to accomplish two evils. One is, that he renders those who listen to such temptations afraid to give themselves up to a life of prayer, dreading that they, too, may be deceived by him; the other evil is, that if the devil did not excite such fears, many persons would draw much nearer to God, on seeing (as I have said), that He is so good, and that it is possible for His divine Majesty to communicate Himself so much in

this life to sinners. This consideration excites in them a great desire to share in these communications; for I know some persons who, encouraged by this, began to give themselves up to a life of prayer, and in a short time became true contemplatives, God bestowing upon them great graces."

In the foregoing extract we ought to note very particularly those words of Saint Teresa: "*It seems that we are sometimes inclined to doubt of the possibility of heavenly favours, through forgetting God's ancient mercies*". When we see extraordinary favours bestowed upon any one, we are always inclined to suspect that they are illusions of the devil or freaks of the imagination, even though the persons whom we see thus favoured possess solid virtue and great love of God. Indeed we are inclined not merely to *suspect* that such persons are the victims of illusions, but we even conclude that such is *actually* the case. Now why do we not recall to mind that in every age God has granted similar favours to a large number of holy souls? Surely we cannot set down all such favours in the past as mere illusions of the devil: why then should we suppose that like favours are not vouchsafed to God s servants in our own times? We believe that the contemplatives of past ages were really favoured by God with extraordinary graces, and why must we always suspect, and almost feel convinced, that the contemplatives of the present time are mere visionaries deceived by the devil?

Whenever, then, we see that a soul is truly inflamed with a great love of God, we should dismiss all fears and suspicions regarding her condition. We should endeavour to cultivate humility in her, while allowing her to enjoy peacefully the divine favours: nay, when she experiences these favours, we should absolutely forbid her even to suspect for a moment that they proceed from the devil.

Although we have already treated of this subject in the 16th chapter, yet, seeing how much Saint Teresa is concerned about it, we will here add some other very consoling reflections which she has left us on the subject. In the 10th chapter of her *Life*, after having said that it is false humility not to recognise as coming from God even singular favours, she speaks of the importance of receiving them as coming from His hands, and continues thus: "It is evident that our love of a person becomes all the stronger, the more we call to mind the favours he has conferred upon us. . . . It seems to me impossible, considering our nature, that one who does not know that he is favoured by God should have a soul capable of attempting great things; because our natural disposition is so miserable, and so much inclined to the things of earth, that whoever does not feel that he possesses some pledge and foretaste of the things of heaven, can with difficulty abhor and effectually detach himself from the things of this world. It is by means of these supernatural

favours that God imparts to us that strength which we lost by our sins. . . . These very favours are the means which revive and strengthen our faith."

The Saint will not even have us entertain an undue dread of temptations to pride, which may possibly assail us on account of these extraordinary favours. "Let us believe," she says, "that He who gives us such favours, will likewise give us grace to recognise the temptation when the devil begins to attack us on this point, and strength to resist and conquer it."

Finally, in the 15th chapter of her *Life*, Saint Teresa says, that there are some souls for whom it will be best *to believe for certain* that their extraordinary favours come from God; "because if they be of a loving and grateful disposition, the remembrance of the favours which God has bestowed upon them will prove more effectual in making them turn to Him, than would all the torments of hell that could possibly be represented to them".

CHAPTER XIX.

The Sixth Petition continued.

§ 1. Of the holy fear of God.

"To what a length have I spoken!" (thus Saint Teresa commences the 41st chapter of the *Way of Perfection*), "and yet I have not said as much as I could

wish, for it is sweet to speak on such a love. What, then, must it be to possess it? O, my Lord, do thou grant it to me. Do not suffer me to leave this world until I desire nothing in it, and am capable of loving nothing in it but Thyself. . . . Let us now proceed to speak of the fear of God.

"The fear of God is, likewise, a matter which is very well understood by those who have it, and by those who stand in intimate relations with God; though I wish you to know that in the beginning it is not very great, except in some whom, as I have already said, our Lord suddenly visits with such copious graces, and raises to such a high degree in prayer, that from that moment it is fully understood by them. But where these heavenly favours do not come in such abundance as to enrich the soul suddenly with all the virtues, this holy fear goes on gradually increasing and acquiring fresh strength day by day. Its presence, however, is perceived from the very beginning; for those who have it immediately avoid sin and its occasions. Nor are other indications also wanting to make us aware of its existence. But once the soul has arrived at contemplation (which is the subject that now more particularly concerns us), the fear of God, just like His love, is very easily discovered, and even manifests itself exteriorly."

Observe that Saint Teresa is here speaking of that chaste and filial fear which is the seventh among the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and which

implies a tenderness of heart whereby the soul is, as it were, wounded by the mere suspicion of displeasing God, and consequently always dreads, as the greatest of all possible evils, not only any spiritual loss she may suffer, but even the very least displeasure which she may cause to that Infinite Good. Wherefore if she were given the option of offending God, even in the very slightest degree, or of throwing herself into a fire equal to that of hell, she would not hesitate a single moment to fling herself into that fire, for she would fear it much less than the least offence of God. This fear of God, therefore, is altogether a loving fear, or perhaps it might be more appropriately called the very perfection of tender love. Wherefore Saint Teresa says, that those who have the fear of God in a great degree, "however narrowly we may observe them, will never be found to walk carelessly; for no matter how closely we may watch them to detect failings in their conduct, our Lord protects them so that they would not with advertence commit a single venial sin, no matter how great the temptation, or how much it might be their interest to do so".

§ 2. Precautions to be adopted in order to acquire this holy fear.

Saint Teresa then goes on to speak of the care which we ought to take to avoid every offence of God, whether mortal or venial; and with regard to venial sins, she distinguishes those which are fully deliberate, from those which are committed with little advertence. From

these latter, as we know from the teaching of the Church, we can never be entirely free in this world without a special privilege from God, which has never yet been granted, as far as is known, to any one except to the Blessed Virgin. But we can always preserve ourselves from deliberate venial sins, and on this subject Saint Teresa speaks as follows:—"May God deliver us from perfectly wilful sin, however small it may be. For I do not understand how we can have such daring as to act in opposition to so great a Lord, even though it be in a little matter; and all the more so, since any such act of ours never can be really so little a matter, considering that it is an offence committed against so powerful a Lord, whom we believe to be actually looking at us while we are engaged in offending Him. Indeed, this seems to me to be a thoroughly premeditated sin, just as if one were to say: 'Lord, although this sin is displeasing to You, nevertheless I will commit it. I already know that You are a witness of my act, and that You dislike it. I am thoroughly aware of all this; but at the same time I prefer to follow my own fancy and passion, rather than Your will.' Now, in a matter of this kind, how can anything be considered little? To me such a sin appears by no means little, but great, and very great."

Wherefore, even though a sin be but venial, yet when it is committed with full advertence to the fact that it is an offence against God, it is an

evil of very great magnitude, and very much to be feared; because God must be greatly displeased with a soul that is prepared to offend Him thus in cold blood, and with perfect deliberation.

Saint Teresa next gives the following cautions, which may enable us to acquire and to maintain in our souls the holy fear of God. "Reflect, my sisters, for God's sake, that if you wish to acquire this fear of God, it is of the utmost importance that you understand what a grievous thing it is to offend God, and that you constantly meditate upon this, seeing that the life of our souls depends upon it." Therefore, if we would fear this evil as we ought, we must meditate continually upon its heinousness. She says, furthermore, that "until we shall have acquired this holy fear, we must always be extremely cautious, and must avoid all occasions and all company that will not assist us to approach nearer to God". Wherefore, if a soul is not thoroughly penetrated with this holy fear of God, she ought to be very careful to avoid all occasions which may possibly prove dangerous to her, having regard to her particular weaknesses. Among such occasions we may set down, generally, all intercourse with persons who are tepid in the service of God; because their disedifying habits, their indiscreet conversation, and their worldly sentiments may produce a bad impression upon those who are but entering on the spiritual life, and may make

them turn back from the path in which they had happily begun to walk.

With her usual admirable discretion, Saint Teresa goes on to say, that *when a soul finds that she has a firm and determined resolution never on any account whatever to offend God, even should she afterwards fall occasionally* through human frailty, she ought then to proceed with greater courage, and not to fear as she used to do previously the occasions mentioned above "for the Lord will assist us, and the habit that we have formed will help us not to offend Him". In such circumstances we must act with a holy liberty, holding intercourse with whomsoever it may be obligatory or fitting to do so, even though they may have their imperfections. For those persons who would have been injurious to you, and instrumental in destroying your soul before you had acquired this true fear of God, will henceforward give you countless opportunities of loving God still more, and blessing Him because He delivered you from what you now see was a manifest danger. And if formerly you were instrumental in increasing their weaknesses, henceforward you will be of assistance in restraining them from them by your very presence; for, without your seeking it, they will pay you this tribute of respect.

§ 3. The liberty consistent with the holy fear of God.

"I frequently bless the Lord when I reflect how it happens that oftentimes, without speaking a single word of reprimand, a servant of

God, by his mere presence, cuts short and prevents conversations which are injurious to His Divine Majesty. I am inclined to think that this happens pretty much for the same reason which makes us cautious, when in society, not to speak badly of a person in presence of his friend; so that when persons find themselves in the presence of one who enjoys the grace of God, that same grace causes them not to give him pain, however lowly and humble he may be, by being guilty of any offence against God, than which nothing could displease or annoy him more. In truth, I cannot assign an adequate reason for this, but I know, nevertheless, that it frequently occurs."

This doctrine of Saint Teresa is very important, since there are some who would wish to see all those who lead a spiritual life entirely cut off from the world, because they fancy that otherwise there can be no safety for them. Such persons may rest assured that, with the assistance of divine grace, it will be much more easy for a soul well grounded in the fear of the Lord to do good to poor worldlings, than that the worldlings should injure her. Let them reflect that if all spiritual persons were to be influenced only by their own excessive fears, the world would be ever going from bad to worse; because its deluded lovers, cut off from all communication with persons illumined by the light of divine grace, would remain more and more hopelessly buried in darkness. Wherefore we

must give no countenance to the doctrine that a thoroughly resolute soul, even though she may sometimes fall through human frailty, should fear the society of poor worldlings to such an extent as to break off all intercourse with them, and thus deprive them of that help which association with spiritual persons might afford, to enable them to realise the emptiness, the nothingness, and the danger of the vanities of this earthly life.

§ 4. Evil consequences resulting from timidity.

"If the soul," says Saint Teresa, "once begins to grow timid, it is a disposition which augurs badly for good of every description; and sometimes she becomes scrupulous, whereby she is rendered useless both for herself and others. But even if she do not fall a victim to scruples, she will in that case be able to manage her own affairs, but she will not be able to conduct many souls to God. For when people see so much anxiety and fear, such is our nature, it frightens and alarms them, and through an apprehension of suffering from like anxieties themselves, they relinquish the desire of following the same path which you are pursuing, even though they clearly perceive that it leads to greater perfection. Wherefore, my sisters, whenever it is possible to do so without offending God, endeavour to be affable, and to treat all persons with whom you may be brought into contact in such manner that they may love your conversation, and admire your manner of life, and may not be frightened or repelled by virtue."

Would to God that, in accordance with this advice of Saint Teresa, all would understand that virtue, piety, and the spiritual life are already extremely odious in the eyes of the world, without our rendering them still more hateful, by making it appear in our conduct and conversation that the spiritual life brings to those who practise it fears, anxieties, and trouble of heart.

Saint Teresa remarks, moreover, that from cultivating a kind of piety which is timid, anxious, and too austere, there arises another defect—that, namely, of regarding as imperfect those who act with greater freedom, even though that greater freedom may be good and holy. "This," she says, "is to be continually tempted by the thought, that unless all persons have your own anxieties and scruples, they do not get on so well."

As a matter of fact, we sometimes find persons who are good, and radically very virtuous, wanting in that mutual esteem which they ought to have for one another, simply because one of them, who is over-anxious and scrupulous, thinks that the other, who acts with greater freedom, must be in consequence very imperfect; while that other, on becoming aware of such uncharitable and unfounded judgments, forms, in turn, an unfavourable estimate of the very austere and intolerant virtue of the first.

Saint Teresa says, likewise, that we should bear with the conversations of others, even

though they might cause us pain through not being as spiritual as we could wish; that we ought not on this account to hold aloof from such persons and look unfavourably upon them, and that by thus treating them with kindness and affability, we shall do them good and shall be loved by them. She then concludes as follows: "Endeavour, therefore, my daughters, to understand this truth—that God does not really mind such trifles as you imagine, and do not suffer your soul and heart to be tied down by feelings of scrupulosity, for thereby you might lose many advantages. Let your intention be right, and let your will, as I have already said, be resolutely determined on no account to offend God. But let your soul not hide herself away in a narrow corner; for instead of acquiring sanctity by this means, she will only contract many imperfections which the devil will cause to grow up in her by other means, and in the end, as I have said above, she will not benefit herself or others as much as she might have done. You see, then, how with these two virtues—the love and the fear of God—we may travel along this road of spiritual perfection safely and quietly."

CHAPTER XX.

On the Seventh Petition: Deliver us from evil. Amen.

§ 1. Of the evils from which we pray to be delivered.

In this concluding Meditation, which Saint Teresa sets down for Sunday, she considers God as our Judge, who must one day judge us regarding the manner in which we have employed all His benefits, and have corresponded to all His graces; and she says that we ought to pray to this our Sovereign Judge, to deliver us from all the evils which we have merited by our sins.

"We do not ask," she says, "to be delivered from this or that evil in particular, but from everything that is properly and truly evil—that is to say, which is calculated to deprive us of the goods of grace and of glory.

"There are certain evils which are sent as punishments—such as temptations, sicknesses, trials, dishonour, and so forth; but these cannot properly be called evils, except in so far as they may become the occasion of our falling into sin; just as riches, honours, and all other temporal advantages may justly be called evils, whenever they are to us an occasion of offending God. Wherefore we pray to be delivered from all those evils, and from all those good things, as well, which may become the cause of our eternal damnation."

We ought, therefore, to bear in mind that prosperity and adversity, and all things else in this world, are in themselves indifferent, and ought to be considered real evils only when they become for us occasions of sin. Consequently, what we call evil, may be in reality a blessing; and what we call good, may prove, after all, an evil. From this it follows that the temptations, the bodily ailments, the insults which may prove helpful in affording us opportunities to practise virtue, may turn out real blessings for us, though the world looks upon them as evils; while, on the other hand, riches, honours, health, and such like matters, which the world regards as blessings, might prove in our case real evils, should they be for us the occasion of offending God. Wherefore, in this Petition, we beg of the Supreme Judge to deliver us from everything which He knows to be prejudicial to our soul.

§ 2. A reflection to be made in this Petition.

Saint Teresa next goes on to say that, in this Petition, we may glance at the Four Last Things — Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven—which include everything that is really important for us, and everything that affects our real interests. For this mortal life is a mere nothing, and the only affair of real importance is to die well, in order to meet with a merciful judgment, and thus escape hell and win heaven.

She says, also, that in offering up this Petition, we may recall to mind the six titles which, as we

have already seen, belong to God—namely, those of loving Father, of powerful King, of sweet Spouse, of good Shepherd, of rich and merciful Redeemer, and of skilful and compassionate Physician; because, in the next life, we shall have to render an account to Him of all the benefits which He has conferred upon us in each of these characters; and as we reflect how badly we have corresponded with His graces, we shall be forced to humble ourselves, and to be filled with a holy confusion.

"Oh!" says Saint Teresa, "with what great fear should we be inspired at the thought of such a load of favours conferred on us by Him, and of so much ingratitude and unkindness on our part!" She wishes, however, that far from yielding to despair, we should be animated by feelings of confidence, and should even cheer our drooping spirits with canticles of thanksgiving, as though we had already obtained full pardon of all our transgressions. "Nevertheless," she says, "incomparably great are the motives of confidence in presenting ourselves at the Judgment Seat, which we may derive from the consideration that we shall have to appear before a Judge who is our Father, our King, our Spouse, and our Physician. We may conclude our prayer, then, with the thanksgiving to which the Holy Prophet David gave utterance in the five following verses of the 102nd Psalm:

"'Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless His holy name.

"'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never rget all He hath done for thee.

"'Who forgiveth all thy iniquities: who ealeth all thy diseases.

"'Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: ho crowneth thee with mercy and compassion.

"'Who satisfieth thy desire with good things: hy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.'

"It is after this manner that our most gracious Lord, showing mercy towards us, grants us pardon for our sins, health for our diseases, life instead of death, continual protection for our infirmities, and for our imperfections the fullness of all good things, until He brings us to the newness of eternal life."

§ 3. Some counsels of Saint Teresa.

Finally, Saint Teresa concludes her *Meditations* on the "Our Father" with some counsels which deserve to be carefully noted, in order that no one may be so influenced by the excellence of this Prayer, as to think that he may abandon every other kind of prayer in favour of it.

"We ought to observe," she says, "that though it is quite true that the Lord's Prayer holds the first place among all vocal prayers, we are not on this account to dispense with all other prayers; because, if we confine ourselves to this one alone, we may grow weary of it. Wherefore, it will be well to add to it some other prayers, especially as the Scriptures contain some very devout prayers, composed by pious persons who were moved thereto by the

Holy Ghost. Of this kind are the prayers of the Publican in the Gospel, of Anna the mother of Samuel, of Esther, of Judith, of King Manasses,* of Daniel, and of Judas Macchabeus, wherein they represented their necessities to God in a wonderfully expressive manner, in words dictated by the feelings and affections of their hearts. This kind of prayer, composed by the person himself who stands in need of divine help, is more efficacious than any other, because it elevates the thoughts, inflames the will, and draws forth tears; and since the words which we utter with such affection, and in which we give expression to our troubles and wants, are our own, they proceed more directly from the heart.

"This manner of praying is very pleasing to our Lord; for as exalted personages take a pleasure in hearing poor rustics making a request in a simple and homely way, so the Lord God feels much pleasure when we pray to Him with such earnestness that, without losing time in seeking for elegant and appropriate expressions, we employ the first that come to our lips, in order to make our wants known to Him in the readiest manner possible. It was thus that Saint Peter and the Apostles, when they feared that they were on the point of being drowned, exclaimed: '*Lord save us: we perish!*' It was thus the Canaanean woman acted, when she begged for

* It may be observed that though the prayer of Manasses is good, it is not canonical like the other prayers mentioned in the text.

mercy. This was the course adopted by the Prodigal Son, when he said: '*Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against Thee*'. The mother of Samuel acted similarly when she said: '*O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt look down on the affliction of Thy servant, and wilt be mindful of me, and not forget Thy handmaid, and wilt give to Thy servant a man-child: I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life*'" (1 Kings i. 11).

The Holy Scriptures are full of such like vocal prayers, which were always most effectual in obtaining their requests; and so, in like manner, may our prayers obtain for us a remedy in our afflictions and miseries. And though the saints are of opinion that we shall attain our end better by mental prayer, nevertheless, the example of many saints and our own experience teach us, that when we pray vocally in this manner God banishes our tepidity, inflames our heart, and disposes it for making greater progress and for praying mentally.

Regarding this matter, we may remark that when we pray in our own words, uttered on the impulse of the moment, our prayer cannot suffer by distractions. For distractions cannot accompany any prayers except those which we know by rote, when the tongue recites materially the words which it is accustomed to utter, while the mind wanders away to matters quite foreign to the subject of our prayers. But when the mind is compelled to compose the sentences which the tongue utters, distractions become impossible,

at least during the time in which we are actually engaged in praying; for we do not deny that, even while praying *extempore*, distractions may come, but then this will occur only in the intervals during which we may occasionally interrupt our prayer for a moment, resuming it again as soon as we advert to the distraction.

It is evident, therefore, that we pray more attentively and with far less distractions when we employ our own words to give expression to the feelings; and the prayer that is least subject to distractions is always more fervent than any other, since we throw our soul into it more completely and more earnestly.

For this reason devout persons are to be counselled not to confine themselves to prayers which they know by rote, but when speaking with the Lord to give expression to the feelings of their heart occasionally in their own words—not by any means in formal and studied language, but in simple expressions, gushing at the moment naturally and spontaneously from the heart. In this manner they will learn to speak and treat with God more familiarly, and with greater love and confidence.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Seventh Petition continued.

SAINT TERESA, explaining this last Petition in

the forty-second chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, discovers therein a deep meaning and a prayerful sentiment especially adapted to souls that are already entirely detached from this miserable world, and who might, each of them, say in all truth and sincerity with Saint Paul: *I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ*—Desiderium habens dissolvi et esse cum Christo (Philipp. i. 23). § 1. The longing for death.

Whereupon, reflecting that Christ, in teaching us the "Our Father," prayed in union with us, as has been already said, she writes as follows: "It seems to me that the good Jesus had reason to ask His Father to deliver us from evil, that is to say, from the dangers and troubles of this life, both for our sakes, since, as long as we remain in this world, we are in great danger, and also on His own account, since we know how weary He was of this life when, at His Last Supper, He said to His apostles: *With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you*, it being His last repast in this world. From these words we may infer how sweet death was to Him. And yet, at the present day, even those who are a hundred years old are not weary of life, but rather desire to live still longer! However, we do not lead so wretched a life, nor do we endure so many sufferings, as did His Divine Majesty.

"And what, in truth, was His entire life but a continual death, since He had ever present before His eyes that cruel death which His enemies were about to inflict upon Him? And

yet this, after all, was the least portion of His sorrow; for He suffered far more by the thought of all the offences which He foresaw would be committed against His Father, and of all the souls that would be lost. Now, if this thought is most distressing even to one of ourselves in this world, provided he entertains any love of God, we may imagine what a torture it must have proved to the immense love of our Lord. Had he not good reason, then, to beg of His Father to deliver him now from so many evils and afflictions, and to grant Him eternal repose in His Kingdom, since He was the lawful heir thereof? Hence it was that He added: "Amen"; and in employing this word He besought His Eternal Father, in my opinion, to deliver us for ever from all evil. In the same way I beseech His Divine Majesty to deliver me from all evil for ever; because by living longer I do not lessen my indebtedness to God, but, on the contrary, become, unfortunately, more and more deeply in debt to Him every day.

"But that which I cannot endure, O Lord, is not to be able to know for certain whether I love You, or whether my desires are pleasing to Your Divine Majesty. O my Lord and my God, deliver me now from all evil, and be pleased to conduct me to that abode where all good things are to be found. What can any longer be expected on this earth by those to whom you have given some knowledge of the nothingness of this world, and who have a lively faith in the exist-

ence of that glory which their Heavenly Father has reserved for them?"

In reading the foregoing extract from Saint Teresa, some persons may possibly be tempted to give way to feelings of undue fear and anxiety because of the words:—"*But that which I cannot endure, O Lord, is not to be able to know for certain whether I love You, or whether my desires are pleasing to your Divine Majesty*". We must, therefore, bear in mind, that in this passage Saint Teresa is speaking of that *infallible certainty* of being in a state of grace, which God does not wish us to possess in this world. It is certain that, except through an extraordinary revelation, no one can be *infallibly* assured that he possesses the great treasure of God's love; and God has ordained that this should be so, in order that souls might the more easily guard against the first and the last of the seven deadly sins—that is to say, Pride and Sloth. As long as the soul is in this kind of uncertainty, she is more humble and more deeply impressed with a sense of her own nothingness; she does not dare to set herself above another, nor does she presume to pronounce judgment upon others. Meanwhile, since she knows that the more diligent she is in serving God the greater becomes her certainty of enjoying His love and grace, she strives with ever-increasing zeal and earnestness to accomplish His divine will, and to conform herself to it in all things.

This kind of uncertainty is sometimes painful

to those souls that love God most, as happened in the case of Saint Teresa herself; but, at the same time, this very anxiety which disturbs them is a strong proof that they really do love God, because those who are not inflamed by the love of God do not experience any of those anxieties, which, substantially, are nothing else than earnest manifestations of love.

But, then, we must ever bear in mind that God does all things well. If He leaves those souls that He loves in this kind of uncertainty, He does so for their greater good, and because it is well that He should act so. Therefore, even were it possible for us to acquire, contrary to the disposition of God's Providence, an infallible certainty that we possessed His love and grace, we ought to reject such knowledge. Any doubts, fears, or anxieties which we may have to endure in accordance with the fulfilment of God's holy will, are infinitely to be preferred even to heaven itself, if it could be acquired without God willing it. God has arranged that we should live in a kind of uncertainty as regards the possession of His love; let us, then, simply bless and thank Him, and conform our will to His.

However, observe carefully that I have spoken only of a *kind of uncertainty;* for it is not true that pious souls are really in a state of doubt and absolute uncertainty as to their being in a state of grace. On the contrary, they are morally certain that they love the Lord, and that

they are loved by Him in return; just as a good son is certain that he loves his father, and is loved by him. And were you to say to such a son, "You do not love your father and he does not love you," that son would not believe you: your language, no doubt, would give him pain, and might produce a certain feeling of nervousness, but, all the while, he would not believe you. Somewhat in the same manner, the passing suspicion that possibly they do not love their God, causes pain occasionally to all souls that really love Him, and produces a certain amount of nervousness; but, with all this, they still remain sufficiently certain that they are not deficient in divine love.

Indeed, as we have already seen, Saint Teresa, in the 40th chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, says that the existence of this love *may be known by some signs, which are so evident that even the blind may see them* (see chap. 18 *supra*). By this she wishes us to understand, that those who find in themselves these evident signs, may rest perfectly satisfied that they do possess the love of God; just as a wife or a son, on seeing the manifestations of affection which are interchanged between themselves and the object of their love, are certain that they really love that person, and are loved by him in return.

Furthermore, it is a matter of the greatest importance to pious persons that, while doing all in their power to please God, they should preserve tranquillity of mind, and a calm confidence

that they are rich in holy love. Without this tranquil confidence, how could they ever be able to repeat this concluding Petition of the *Our Father* in the sense assigned to it by Saint Teresa? It would be simply impossible for them to do so: for it is neither possible nor suitable that a soul in a state of uncertainty regarding the possession of God's grace, should pray to be delivered from all the evils of this world by means of death, seeing the terrible risk that would follow of being afterwards subjected to the eternal and irreparable evils of the life to come.

Wherefore, let those souls that have already discovered the vanity and wretchedness of this deceitful world, endeavour to become each day more perfect, as far as they can, in the love of the Eternal Good. Let them strive to love Him with their whole heart, with their whole mind, and with all their strength, and let them do all in their power to please Him in everything, and always to accomplish His most holy will. This is their duty. But, while doing this, let them maintain tranquillity in their souls, and even though they should be conscious of committing many faults, let them still be calm, and confident that they love God, and are loved by Him in return—that is to say, that they enjoy His friendship. This confidence you ought to preserve undiminished until death, which appears so frightful and so bitter to worldlings, may appear to you a sweet and consoling relief.

§ 2. The longing for death in Contemplatives.

Saint Teresa goes on to say: "To ask for this (*i.e.*, death) with an earnest desire and a firm resolution, in order to go to enjoy God, is, for contemplative souls, a sure sign that the favours which they receive in prayer come to them from heaven; and, therefore, let those who possess this sign value it very highly. . . . It is no wonder that those who receive favours from God should yearn to be in that abode where His favours may be enjoyed to the fullest extent; that they are unwilling to tarry in a world where so many obstacles prevent them from enjoying so great a good; and that they long to be in that land where the Sun of Justice never sets. Everything that such persons see upon earth appears to them gloomy and miserable, so that I am amazed how they can endure to live there at all. It is certain that those cannot live contented in this world, who have already begun to enjoy God and to receive foretastes of His Heavenly Kingdom, where souls live with no other will than that of its Supreme King."

Wherefore, as happened in the case of Saint Teresa herself, souls that are favoured with the gift of contemplation, in which God allows them to enjoy foretastes of heaven, ordinarily feel themselves influenced by a love of, and a longing for, death. Let us hear Saint John of the Cross in a passage in which he speaks of the affective presence of God enjoyed by a soul in contem-

plation.* "This affective presence of the Beloved," he says, "is of a nature so sublime, that beneath it the soul feels concealed an infinite something, whereby God communicates to her certain obscure visions of His divine beauty, which produce in her such an effect, that she forthwith longs and faints away with the desire of that which is hidden beneath that presence. . . . Then the soul faints away with the desire of being absorbed in that Supreme Good, which, though hidden, it feels to be present." At this same moment, too, the soul says within herself, "The vision of Thee and Thy beauty is so full of delights that I cannot endure it, but must die in the very act of beholding it: '*let the vision of Thy beauty kill me*'. . . . Nor is it anything strange for the soul to wish to die on beholding the beauty of God, in order to enjoy Him for all eternity. For if the soul were favoured with but a single glimpse of the majesty and beauty of God, she would not only desire to die once in order to behold Him for eternity, but she would cheerfully endure a thousand most painful deaths to see Him even for a brief moment; and after having seen Him thus, she would desire to suffer as much again in order to see Him a second time, even for a passing instant. . . . 'Perfect

* By the "affective" presence of God in a soul, Saint John of the Cross understands His presence by spiritual affection, when He signifies to the soul that He is dwelling within her "in divers ways of refreshment, joy, and gladness" (*Spiritual Canticle*, stanza xi.).

charity casteth out fear.' Death cannot prove bitter to a soul that loves God, because she finds therein all her delights and the sweets of love. The remembrance of it cannot bring her sadness, because it is the harbinger of all joy. It cannot prove painful and oppressive to her, since it is the ending of all her troubles and sufferings, and the beginning for her of all happiness. She looks upon death as her friend and spouse, and rejoices in remembering it as if the day of her death were her bridal day. She yearns for the day and the hour of death, more than the kings of the earth long for kingdoms and principalities" (*A Spiritual Canticle*, stanza xi.). This is what must ordinarily occur in the case of contemplative souls; because, in addition to what they know by faith, they have a practical experience of supernatural enjoyments, and, so to speak, swim in the secret sweetness of their Lord.

§ 3. This desire would be suitable to all.

But it may be asked: Is it, then, impossible for those who have nothing but the light of faith to guide them, and who have never been raised to the heights of contemplation, to pray that God would deliver them from all evil by quickly summoning them out of this world, where life is encompassed by so many evils? No: even these persons may attain such a degree of perfection, as to desire above all things that which is feared most of all things in this world—death. If they but obtain the grace to understand, by means of a lively faith, the deceits, the dangers, the very

great evils of this mortal life wherein God is so much offended, and the reality, the security, the immense happiness of life eternal, where it is impossible to do anything else but love God, they, too, will become disgusted with the world through a longing for heaven, and will learn to beg of God the favour of death. Truly happy are they who shall reach this point. Such as these are completely detached from every false good; they are entirely united to God by grace, and are fully disposed for perfect union with Him in glory. Let us hear how Saint Teresa speaks on this matter. "Oh, how very different from what it actually is ought our life on this earth to be, in order that it might justify us in not desiring death! How very differently is our will inclined here below from what is the will of God! It is God's will that we should love the truth, and we love lies instead; it is God's will that we should love what endures for ever, while we love the things that pass away; it is God's will that we should love objects that are noble and sublime, but we go in pursuit of things which are base and worldly: God would wish us to love only what is certain, and we love what is precarious and deceitful. This world is all vanity, my daughters; let us, then, beseech God to deliver us for ever from all evil. And although we may not entertain this desire in a very perfect degree, nevertheless, let us force ourselves, all the while, to offer up this prayer. For what does it cost us, or how can it prejudice our petition, to ask

for much, since He to whom we pray is Omnipotent! It would be a shame to ask but a paltry farthing from a great and most generous Lord. And that we may do something even still better than this, since we have already made Him an offering of our will, let us be prepared to receive everything from Him in a spirit of absolute resignation to His will. May His name be for ever blessed in heaven and on earth, and may His holy will be always accomplished in me. Amen."

We should remark how, in this passage, Saint Teresa, seeing that it must prove very difficult to the weakness of our nature to offer up a petition requiring such high perfection, exhorts us, nevertheless, to do so courageously, since it is nowise difficult to God to grant our request. Her words are very beautiful: "*What does it cost us, or how can it prejudice our petition to ask for much, since He to whom we pray is Omnipotent: it would be a shame to ask but a paltry farthing from a great and most generous Lord*". Therefore, we ought, so to speak, to be more afraid and more ashamed to beg trifling favours from God, than to ask Him for great ones.

The instructions which Saint Teresa gives us in this chapter contain lessons of very high perfection, and once more we repeat that they are truly blessed, who, in the spiritual life, attain to a degree so high as no longer to desire anything in this world but death, in order that their perfect union with God may be the more speedily

accomplished. But since the Saint adds that we may still do something better even than this, let us pay marked attention to her concluding words: "*Since we have already made Him an offering of our will, let us be prepared to receive everything from Him in a spirit of absolute resignation to His will and pleasure*". This must be the ultimate goal of all our desires, however holy and perfect they may be. Wherefore, even those who long for death through a pure impulse of love, in order that they may be released from this life and taken to God, ought never to desire it except at whatever time it may be God's holy will and pleasure to send it. For the highest degree of all possible perfection is to desire the accomplishment of the pure and simple will of God; so that our desires should extend to nothing whether great or little, whether for soul or for body, whether for time or for eternity, whether appertaining to grace or to glory, except what God wills. And this we, too, should desire with all the earnestness of which our soul is capable.

CONCLUSION.

INASMUCH as all devout persons who may read this Treatise on Prayer, will not be able on all occasions to follow the flights of such an Eagle of Perfection as Saint Teresa, and will not be capable, when reciting the Lord's Prayer, of

entering into all her pious sentiments, we shall conclude this little work with an observation made by the Saint herself, which clearly shows her admirable discretion, and at the same time is calculated to afford consolation to those novices in the spiritual life, who as yet have not sufficient light or fervour to follow her.

Saint Gregory the Great said of the Holy Scripture, that it was a sea in which a lamb might walk near the shore without being drowned, while, at the same time, an elephant, by moving out into its depths, might find ample room to swim :—*ut et agnus ambulet et elephas natet.* In the 37th chapter of the *Way of Perfection*, Saint Teresa says the same thing, in different words, regarding the Lord's Prayer. She there remarks that the Lord's Prayer is "so admirably composed by such a good Master, that each one of us may apply it to his own individual wants". She then continues as follows: "I have sometimes thought with myself, why it was that the Lord was not pleased to declare Himself more explicitly in matters at once so sublime and obscure, so that we might all understand them; and the reason of this seemed to me to be, that since this prayer was intended for all classes of persons, He purposely left it thus undefined, in order that each one, thinking that he understood it in its proper sense, might offer up the several Petitions according to his own meaning and needs, and thereby derive comfort from it. In this way contemplatives, who no longer desire

earthly blessings as being persons already much devoted to God, may ask for heavenly favours, which, through God's great goodness, are attainable here on earth. So, too, those who live in the world (and it is well that persons should live in the world according to their state) may ask, moreover, for their daily bread, wherewith to sustain themselves and their families, as is perfectly just and holy; and the same may be said with regard to other things of which they may stand in need."

In this passage Saint Teresa would give us to understand, that our Lord purposely formulated the Petitions of the *Paternoster* in such manner, that they might be capable of a very wide interpretation according to the various capacities and conditions of men; so that when reciting the prayer each one might say it in the sense suggested to him by the greater or lesser amount of spiritual light which he may possess, and with that degree of affection which may exist in a heart more or less inflamed by divine love. Consequently, contemplatives, and others also, who, though they may not yet have reached the heights of contemplation, are, nevertheless, thoroughly detached from the world and in close union with God, will easily be able, when reciting the Lord's Prayer, to follow the spiritual flights of Saint Teresa; while others, again, must content themselves with keeping to the more obvious and literal sense of this divine prayer. Thus, for example, in reciting the Fourth Petition, souls of

the first class will be unable to lower themselves to ask for corporal food, inasmuch as they feel a loathing for it, and hunger only after spiritual nourishment; but, on the other hand, persons who are less perfect, while asking for spiritual food, will ask also for the food of the body, and to do so, far from being reprehensible, will be good and holy, although it would have been more perfect not to ask for it. This same remark applies in like manner to the other Petitions.

This is why Saint Teresa goes on to say: "Observe that there are two points in this prayer, namely, the resigning our own will and the forgiveness of injuries, which are intended for every one, and which must be fulfilled by every one. It is, indeed, true that in this, as I have said, there are degrees. Those who are perfect will resign their will in a perfect manner, and they will forgive with the perfection already mentioned. We, my sisters, will do the best we can, seeing that our Lord accepts everything."

We see, therefore, that no one need despair of being a sharer in God's mercy, because he may feel himself still weak and imperfect. Let him simply do his best. If he can do but little, the Lord will accept even that little: He refuses nothing that is good. What a consoling doctrine this is! What an admirable mistress is Saint Teresa! How much more discreet and prudent she is, than those other spiritual guides, who would expect all souls to mount up, and quickly, to the highest degrees of sanctity, and who, with-

out taking into account the infirmities of some souls, would threaten woes against those who proceed slowly and are not very generous with God. It is quite true that these latter might do better: nevertheless, God accepts the little that they are actually doing. Let us not, then, frighten them; for otherwise, owing to their weakness, they may become disheartened, and may cease to do any good at all.

Let us remember that the goodness of God infinitely surpasses anything that we can by possibility imagine; and one single "Our Father," well said, may make a soul rich in virtues. Saint Teresa assures us that this is so. "Oh," she says, "what a good Paymaster God is! How He rewards His servants without measure! We may say this prayer once only in such a manner that our Lord, seeing how we are free from all duplicity and ready to do everything that we say, will make us rich. He loves exceedingly that we should treat with Him sincerely, truthfully, and plainly, not speaking one thing with our lips and meaning another thing in our hearts. He always gives more than we ask" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 37).

No more consoling words than the foregoing could be found to conclude this Treatise, and with them, accordingly, we conclude it, exclaiming, with Saint Teresa: "May the Lord be for ever blessed and praised, from whom proceedeth every good word, and thought, and act of ours. Amen" (*Way of Perfection*, chap. 42).